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Old and Young.

Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire.

THE AVON VALLEY

giving a Simple Description of the Avon from
Warwickshire to above Stratford-on-Avon,
with Songs & Pictures of the River
and its Neighbourhood

by

J. L. Henry, Esq.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press

1906


The Idyllic Avon

Being a Simple Description of the Avon from
Tewkesbury to above Stratford-on-Avon,
with Songs & Pictures of the River
and its Neighbourhood

By
John Henry Garrett

WITH TWO MAPS




G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press

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PREFACE

WE purpose making a pilgrimage to Stratford-on-Avon, rowing up the Avon from Tewkesbury, and to make the trip in such fashion that we may become intimately acquainted with the river through fifty miles of its course. We intend making the voyage in a very leisurely way, stopping to dwell for a time in inns and cottages in the towns and villages by which the river flows, to enter old houses and churches, to look up the history of some of the places to which we come, and to find interest in everything that presents itself to our observation in those remote shires of Gloucester, Worcester, and Warwick. We shall loiter to talk about the birds and beasts and flowers, or to converse with the rustics about local affairs, and we shall sing our own river songs as we row along or lie in shady or sunny spots, and shall bring away with us pictures to remind us of the places we have seen.

If you have a mind to escape the busy bustling world and to live for a time a slow and simple life, come and be one with us, while we sojourn for a summer season in the land of The Idyllic Avon.

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The Idyllic Avon

THE IDYLLIC AVON

CHAPTER I

TEWKESBURY

NEAR the end of the river Avon is the town of Tewkesbury, which is situated, as is told in that great old work, Rudder's *History of Gloucestershire*, "in a rich vale near the confines of Worcestershire, and watered by four rivers, like the garden of Eden." These four rivers are the Severn and its great tributary the Avon, and the Carrant and Swilgate, which, in an ordinary way, it is sufficient to call brooks. These two last mentioned flow into the Avon, one at either end of the town, which has water almost upon every side—too much of it upon occasions, for there is a phrase which tells that "the water is out at Tewkesbury," when you may know that the place is uncomfortably wet, its meadows being flooded by a too precipitate meeting of its several rivers, which are hurrying forward in deep swirling currents under pressure of heavy and continuous rain. More generally, however, the appearance of Tewkesbury and its neighbourhood is suggestive of a Paradise, and perhaps it was upon a fine May morning that our old author saw it, such as that upon which we now make its acquaintance.

We are standing together upon the Avon Bridge, over which the town is entered at one end of its chief street. It is a very ancient stone bridge, long and low, and with strong, narrow arches, built seven hundred years ago to the order of King John. That monarch married a daughter of the lord of Tewkesbury and had a great house or castle here. He built the bridge and gave the tolls of Tewkesbury Market, which were his due, to keep it in repair. But the townspeople, whilst being relieved from paying their tolls, forgot their obligation, and the old bridge requiring repairs in the fourteenth year of the reign of King Charles I., the work was ordered to be done at the expense of the County of Gloucester, and the town thereafter to keep it in good condition.

The Avon, having discharged a portion of its waters over a weir to join the Severn by a shorter course, passes on under the bridge and at the backs of the houses of High Street and Church Street towards its mouth a mile distant. The grey tower of Tewkesbury Abbey overlooks it on the left, and in its course below the bridge lie two or three flour-mills, a last lock, with a little haven for barges and a quay to one side. They call this part of the Avon the "Mill Avon." There have always been mills and millers at Tewkesbury, for in Domesday Book, that remarkable record of the survey of England ordered by William the Conqueror, it is mentioned that there were two mills here at that time.

In the angle between the Avon and the Severn there is a wide expanse of flat green meadow-land called "The Ham," and a quarter-of-a-mile up the

meadow-bordered road rises a little hill called The Mythe, near which the course of the Severn is marked by a high bridge that spans the greater river finely by a single arch of iron. Over that bridge lies the way into Herefordshire, whilst the road straight up over the Mythe Hill brings one to the city of Worcester.

The bright green grass of the meadows is partly hidden by a covering of the most brilliant gold. Never did gold in vestment or chalice of emperor shine so brightly as do the buttercups at Tewkesbury, and it is a gold that awakens no avarice, or desire to clutch it all for self, but only a pure delight, which everyone who can see may share. Beyond the buttercups and over the Severn rise low hills clad in verdure of darker green, over which hover white clouds; but further away the misty purple of the mountain-line of Malvern makes a background more or less clearly visible. On the other sides of Tewkesbury there is a repetition of the bright green and wealth of gold, and, on the higher ground, still within hearing of the Abbey bells, are cultivated fields and farmhouses with orchards about them, where the apple-trees are now showing their pink and white bloom; and that way there are other hills, the green Cotswolds also within sight.

An unkempt-looking drover, driving cattle, passes over the Avon Bridge, and a cloud of dust higher up the Mythe Road betokens the approach of other persons and animals, all making their way to Tewkesbury Market, for it is Wednesday and a market-day. Just above the bridge on the town side, the old, black-beamed Bear Tavern is receiving its share of the incomers, whose traps and carts and gigs are, one

after another, wheeled out under the great elm-tree opposite, until they grow into quite a considerable aggregation of wheels and shafts. It is the same at "The Swan" and "The Hop-pole" higher up the town, for there is a great deal of jogging in and out of Tewkesbury on the part of jolly millers and farmers from country places around to the market here. Tewkesbury Market was first established, as Domesday Book says, "by the Queen," presumably the wife of the Conqueror. How many generations have come and gone since then, humanity, as represented by the marketers, always much the same as it may be seen in the various inns and market-places to-day.

At "The Swan" we presently have an opportunity of meeting the marketers at dinner, when we go there to partake of the "market ordinary." Would that every dinner were no less ordinary, for surely anyone should be able to make a dinner of Severn salmon, roast beef and mutton, vegetables, bread and cheese and salad, with bright ale and cider to drink *ad libitum*; if not, or if he grumbles at the inclusive charge of two shillings, it may indeed be questioned whether he be worthy to claim descent from the good Saxon thanes and churls who came to Tewkesbury Market in the days of William the Conqueror. There is a hum of conversation amongst the bronzed big men around the festive board, whilst waiters are running to and fro, and up and down stairs, with well filled jugs, and well loaded dishes, and the rattle of plates and glasses accompanies the satisfaction of good appetites. We open conversation with one of the millers and tell him we have heard that the mills at Tewkesbury turn

out gold instead of flour; in reply he only laughs and declares there is more put into the mills than comes out.

They used to manufacture cloth here; when that failed they took up the manufacture of stockings; when the trade of stockings drifted elsewhere, they took to shirt-making, the stiffened fronts and cuffs of shirts particularly, which are now made and sent away in gross quantities, and, as the shirt seems likely to remain a garment of common wear, this industry may perhaps continue for some time in Tewkesbury. The most classic manufacture of Tewkesbury, however, was "smart biting mustard" made into stiff balls. This is no longer a purchasable product, but Sir Robert Atkyns, in his book *The ancient and present State of Gloucestershire*, (1712), mentions it as being then in vogue, and it is also mentioned by Shakespeare in the play of "Henry IV," so that it must have had a use of over a hundred years.

Falstaff: "He a good wit, hang him baboon! His wit is as thick as Tewkesbury mustard."

Shakespeare, who knew his Avon well, and was equally familiar with other parts of Gloucestershire, no doubt knew Tewkesbury as well as its mustard.

Here is a ballad concerning the old mill and the millers :

BALLAD OF THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE MILLERS AND THE
DRAPER'S SON

At Tewkesbury once lived a poor draper's son,
And a miller's sole daughter whose love he had won,
But the miller, her father, of him would have none,
And bade him begone with a frown;

The Idyllic Avon

For he sat in his chair with a sharp touch of gout,
And called the poor draper a simpleton lout,
Then brandished a stick, when the draper got out.
You Gloucestershire millers mind what you're about,
A good mill stands in Tewkesbury town !

Then he called to his daughter, saying, " Never again
Let that simpleton into your presence on pain
Of my bitterest wrath," and the tears fell like rain
Down her cheeks from her eyes bright and brown.
But the miller, though angry, was ill and was old,
You have heard he had gout, but his wealth was untold,
For instead of pure flour his mill turned out pure gold.
You Gloucestershire millers your breaths may well hold,
For this mill stands in Tewkesbury town !

So the simpleton lout left the maid and the mill,
And stood at his counter and counted his till,
Which the miller's sole daughter sometimes helped to fill
By the purchase of ribbon or gown;
Whilst the rest of the millers cast envious eyes
On that marvellous mill, and agreed " When he dies
We will buy up the mill, and secure a rich prize."
You Gloucestershire millers are wonderfully wise,
When at market in Tewkesbury town !

Then the old miller died, and to rest he was laid,
When the mill and the money went out of the trade,
For being no will, they all passed to the maid,
And the hope of the millers was flown;
For their schemes ~~re~~ the mill, made no manner of shape,
When the miller's sole daughter was married in crape,
To that simpleton draper—that mere shred of tape.
You Gloucestershire millers may well sit agape,
For this happened in Tewkesbury town !

When from the Avon bridge we turn Black Bear
Corner and walk up the High Street, a wonderful
variety of ancient houses challenges inspection, such
as is hardly to be met with in any other town in
England. The " Black Bear " itself, could it relate



Black Bear Corner.

Tewkesbury.

its experiences, would have much to tell us of the happenings in Tewkesbury during many centuries. This inn appears to stand in appropriate relationship to the old bridge, and may be of equal age. Opposite to it is a good modern house, and in the course of the street above, specimens of the house architecture of every succeeding era since the thirteenth or fourteenth century up to the present time are met with. Some of the existing houses were undoubtedly standing at the time of the Wars of the Roses, and some even at an earlier date, and their inhabitants looked into the street upon many a pageant and procession, as when a king visited the town, or when the feudal lord of Tewkesbury led forth his following to fight the king's wars in France or elsewhere abroad, or to fight for or against the king in the several civil wars that raged in one age or another in England. At the battle of Tewkesbury, and again to a minor extent in the time of Cromwell, the fighting was brought to the very thresholds of these old houses, and the street was stained with the blood of the combatants. Not seldom the warrior-lord of Tewkesbury, who rode forth the town in the pride of life and power, was slain at the war, and his dead body alone brought back to the lady who waited his return, and the procession of pride was turned to one of sorrow and tears as they bore him to the Abbey for burial with his forefathers and kindred. These old houses, too, have passed through periods of feasting, and of hunger-riot and cry for bread. They, which once stood in the shadow of a great monastic institution, saw that, and the power for good and evil which it

represented, swept away, and the families that dwelt in these houses have come and gone, and change has followed change, and still they remain the witnesses of history. With timbered walls, odd windows, and upper stories thrust forward upon extended beams or corbels, they appeal to the beholder as links to the long past, which it would be a pity to destroy, for it is well to have reminders of what things mankind suffers in attaining to a civilization that is some trifle more advanced than that which used to hold.

At the other end of the town from "The Black Bear," opposite the Abbey, and at the corner made by Church Street and the short lane that goes down to the abbey mill, stands another old inn. This is "The Bell." Externally this inn, also, is of uncommon appearance, being a good and well-preserved example of an ancient type of house. The black wooden beams in its walls and its many gables are likely to attract the notice of the passer-by, who may cease to pass by, as the result of the attraction, and, entering in, be not disappointed by the aspect of the interior. There are a couple of parlours, one over the other, the lower one being the eating-room, cool, clean, old, quaint, with windows looking down the street, which shows, through its curving length, some other old houses in black-and-white and more in Georgian red brick. This is Church Street, and is the main road in from Gloucester and the Lower Lode. On summer days the sun shines straight down it or, getting to one side or other, throws the shadows of the houses across the road, from left to right and from right to left alternately; and sometimes the shadows



The High Street.

Tewkesbury.

are the only occupants of the street. From time to time a vehicle or two go past, or a few pedestrians tread the narrow pavement, and a good many stop opposite the inn, because the Abbey is there, and that is the centre of interest for most visitors. Probably the close proximity of the Abbey has a connection with the name of the inn.

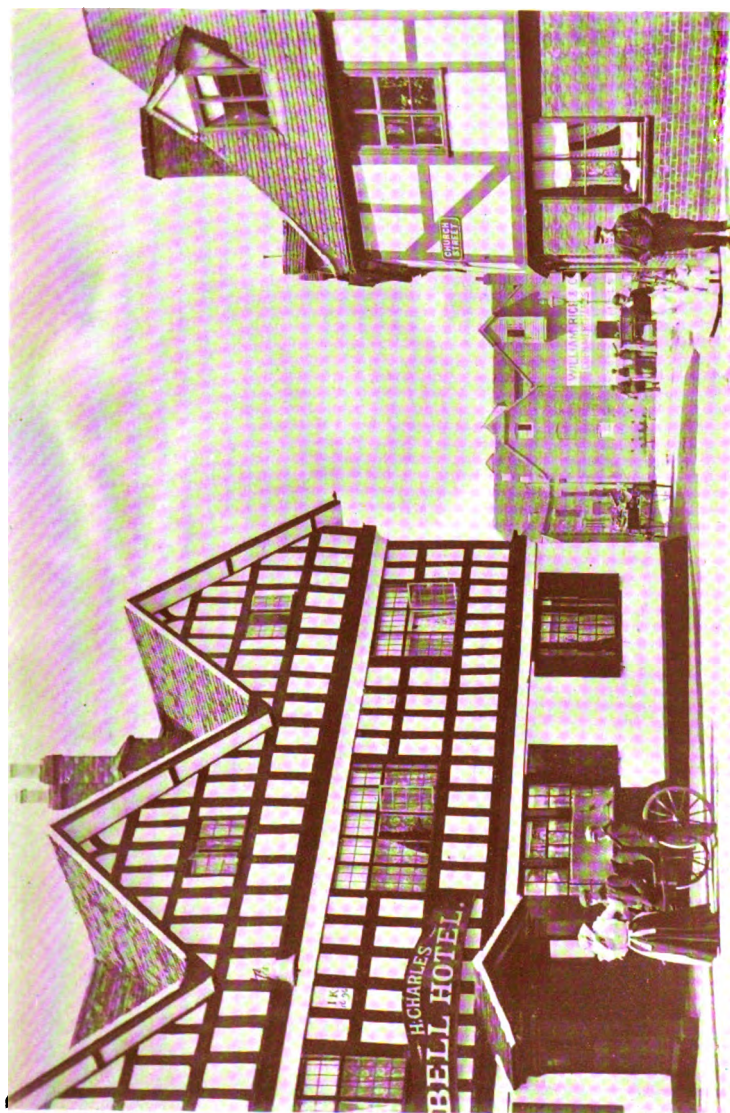
"The Bell" has comfortable bed-chambers, with windows looking towards the Abbey, the street, or the river, upon scenes that are simple and reposeful. All day and all night the Abbey chimes and the strokes of the hours upon the great tenor bell can be heard in every room of the inn; but these sounds, as well as those of the rushing water that drives the millwheel, are soon unperceived by the accustomed ear.

Down at the mill, where there is a foot-bridge leading across the river into the Ham meadows, the great black wheel turns all day, churning the water to a white foam beneath it. Barges and waggons approach the mill on the upper side, bringing sacks of grain, which are swung up aloft through the hoist-hatch, to be ground and sifted and carried out again some day from below and placed in other barges and waggons by the flour-whitened miller's men. The mill is much in evidence at the inn, and in crossing over the river by the foot-bridge you pass close by the open door, through which can be seen a great many full sacks, and sometimes a figure moving in the dusky interior; and you may hear an occasional voice raised to be heard above the hum of the machinery.

Out by the skittle-alley and across the stable-yard of "The Bell" there is a gate leading into a garden

where old-fashioned border plants flourish — such as flags and columbines and monkshood, the latter being appropriate to its location as a reminder that the garden occupies part of the site of the old monastery, an original remnant of which is still to be seen in the heavily buttressed wall, which at present supports an ancient brick malt-house, and between this and the river there is a small public pleasaunce, with sunny seats against the old wall and facing the river. At the further end of "The Bell" garden another gate opens upon a famous bowling-green, where the fine piece of level greensward is surrounded by a thick, high hedge of yews, with lilacs, thorns, elders, and other blossoming trees. All around are arbours and ivy bowers, very pleasant to sit in upon summer afternoons, as now, when the air is heavily laden with the sweet odours of the blossoms which show white and yellow and mauve to relieve the fresh, intense verdure of the foliage and turf of the bowling-green. No less soothing than these sights and odours is the sound of the water rushing down the mill-race hard by, and the drone of the mill. Sometimes the old bowling-green is very quiet, and you may sit in one of the arbours undisturbed, excepting, perhaps, by the song of a robin that repeats the few bars of his plaintive lay from a branch of a tree a few yards away. Presently come a company of members of the bowling-club to play bowls, which being one of the quietest of all out-door sports, is well suited to this delectable bowling-green of The Bell Inn.

Not very far above "The Bell," branching off the main road, is the lane to the Lower Lode. It runs



"The Bell" and the Abbey Mill.

Tewkesbury.

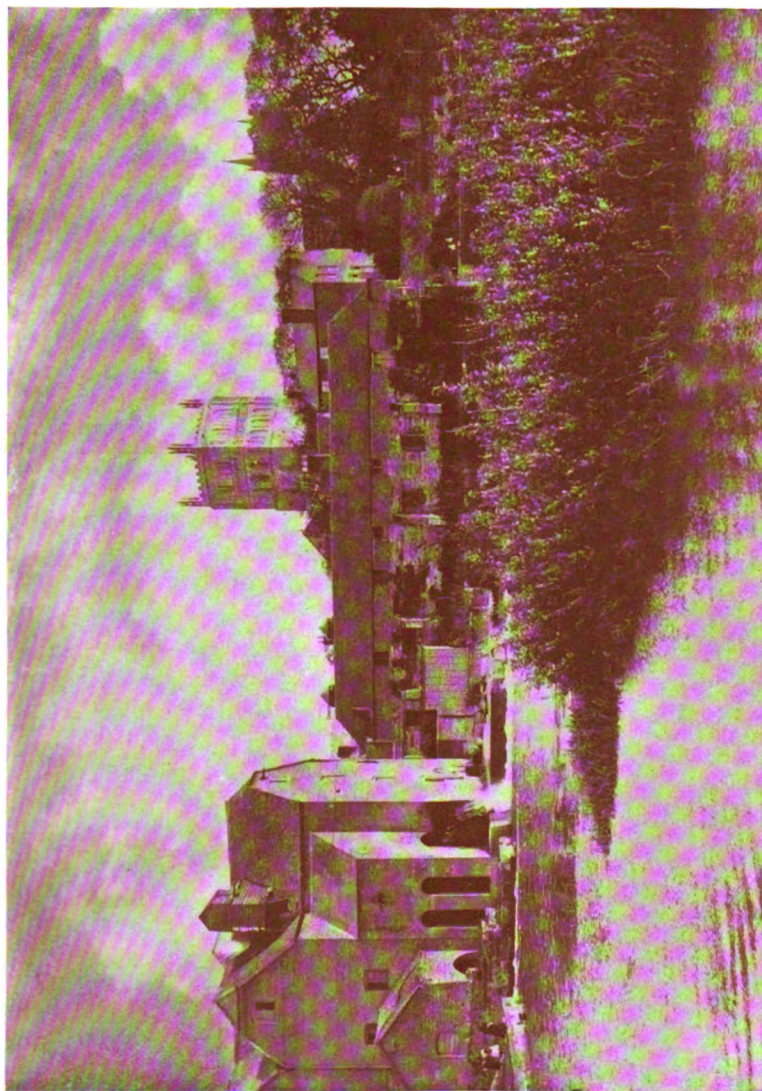
parallel to the Avon as this river proceeds towards its ultimate bourne at the lode. The word "*lode*" is from the Anglo-Saxon "*ladan*" to lead, and, in connection with the river, is intended to signify a road leading over the river, or a passage. At Tewkesbury there were of old two passages over the Severn, called "The Upper Lode" and "The Lower Lode," and four or five miles below Tewkesbury, on the Severn, is also "The Wainlode," whilst below Gloucester is "Framilode."

The Avon, when quit of the buildings of Tewkesbury, has cut for itself a deep channel which has meadow on both sides; and so it goes down through the last half mile of its course towards the Severn, gazed at, as it were, by the houses at this end of the town, and, amongst and above these, the Abbey, with its massive tower, rises dominant.

We are about to take a walk together down Lower Lode Lane in the evening. It is a shady lane between hedges, very quiet and peaceful. Now and then we stop to look back at the Abbey tower, or across the meadow and the knee-deep grass, with all its flowers, to the river beyond. The lane is a highroad for places over the Severn and ends abruptly at the landing-place of the Lower Lode Ferry. Here is the ultimate end of the Avon, for, just to the right of the landing-place, it flows softly into the Severn, surrendering itself without commotion to the greater river. At this spot we stand awhile to contemplate the meeting of the waters. In thought we trace the Severn and the Avon back in their courses to the places where each takes origin — the first-named up the side of Mount

Plinlimmon in Wales, the other on the high Northamptonshire plain. The two rivers, starting far apart, are destined to meet one another and be mingled into one strong stream, like two lives that are drifting towards each other from birth and, at length, join and, losing each its individuality, make together a more powerful and perfect unity.

A little group of people, returning from the town, has collected upon the strand where the grey roadway of the lane from Tewkesbury touches the water's edge. There are a man and woman with a horse and cart, and a small calf in the back of the cart; also a girl pedestrian carrying a basket, and a bicyclist with his machine. The girl says she lives at Forthampton, over the river, and has been to Tewkesbury to make purchases of grocery. The man in the cart seems in bad humour; he alternately mumbles to the woman at his side some peevish or angry words, and pulls up his horse's head with a loud "Come up," when the animal strains forward in a vain attempt to bring its lips to the water. The sun is low in the clouds on the other side of the Severn, behind the Lower Lode Inn. This inn, which faces hitherward towards the mouth of the Avon, and its outbuildings, the tall trees about them, and the reddened clouds, are all reflected in the smooth river. Some geese upon the green in front of the inn on the other side of the Severn, raise a loud alarm when the ferryman comes bustling down to the river-side. He can be dimly seen bending above the crank of the wheel which, picking up link after link of the sunken chain, brings over the broad-bottomed float to convey the passengers across. Slowly the heavy craft ap-



The Abbey, the Malthouse, and the Mill.

Tewkesbury.

proaches the shore until it touches; then we all go aboard and move dreamily away into the mirrored clouds.

The passage is soon made, for the voyage across the Severn is but brief, and we step ashore in front of the Lower Lode Inn and, whilst the others proceed by lane or footpath upon their homeward way, we tarry by the inn and, finding a seat beneath the trees, sit there awhile and look down upon the river and over to Tewkesbury a mile away. On this side of the Severn there are walks by footpaths through green fields with hedges gleaming white with may-bloom, and larks soaring above. The view of Tewkesbury is very fine from the path that runs along by Severn side towards the Mythe bridge. We walk along there as far as the lock and weir upon the Severn. A long procession of barges which are being towed by a tug, pass us on their way up the river. They will get into the canal which makes a junction with the Severn near Worcester, and so will reach towns situated deep inland. When we return, the ferryman paddles us back to the Tewkesbury side in the flat-bottomed ferry-boat, which he uses when it is unnecessary to take across the greater vessel, and we come back at leisurely pace up Lower Lode Lane as the shades of night are falling.

Immediately on the right of us is the site of the last battle of the Wars of the Roses — those wars between the rival Houses of York and Lancaster, struggling for supremacy and the throne of England, which were so destructive of the old aristocracy, bringing many an ancient name and dignity to an end by death in battle

of both holder and inheritor, and resulting, unintended and unawares, in the abolition of the feudal system.

The battle of Tewkesbury was fought on May 4th, 1471. Twenty days earlier, the Earl of Warwick, "The King-maker," had been defeated and slain at Barnet, and the victorious Edward IV. of York, after being acclaimed victor and king in London, had retired to Windsor, when Margaret of Anjou, the proud Queen of Henry VI., landed at Weymouth with her son Edward and a body of French soldiers. Let our imagination carry us back to the day before the battle, and we will join the Queen as she approaches Gloucester coming from the direction of Bristol. She is mounted on a palfrey, with her son, Prince Edward, not far away, and the fighting prelate, the Prior of St. John, riding with her immediate body-guard. The men marching in front and about her are chiefly Frenchmen, mercenaries, who have thrown in their lot with her under promise of great reward. The rest of her army largely consists of rudely-clad rustics, picked up in Somerset and Devonshire, into which counties a march has been made for recruiting purposes since the Queen landed at Weymouth—hard men enough in their way, but badly armed with whatsoever arms could be placed in their hands; rude pikes, bills, bows; untrained, undisciplined, numbering some few thousands of men. The army is divided into three commands; the Duke of Somerset, the Earl of Wenlock, the Prior and the Prince, and the Earl of Devonshire taking charge of respective portions, and endeavouring to keep the men together and give them some instruction as they march,



The Evening Return.

The Lower Lode, Tewkesbury.

appointing sergeants and corporals from amongst them according to observations they make of the character and bearing of the men as they go along. So they come straggling up the Vale of Severn, the leaders probably aware of the approach of the enemy and most anxious to get across the Severn where they hope to be joined by Welsh allies. The first bridge across the river is at Gloucester, and this ancient walled city they are now approaching, and a band goes forward in advance to ask the assistance of the city in the shape of refreshment and a free passage of the Severn. But King Edward's messengers are there before them; the citizens have been won over to his side, and they close their gates against the Queen and prepare to defend their city against her if need be. Now there is a conference of the leaders, and the advance-guard being called to a halt gives an opportunity for the stragglers, who are growing tired and hungry, to close up. The position is a vexatious one: the Duke of Somerset, who is a very passionate man, grows angry and some friction and altercation arise between him and the Earl of Wenlock. There are hasty questions as to the next place on the river above, where a passage can be made, and it is at the ford at the Lower Lode, Tewkesbury, ten miles away; so there is nothing else to be done but make for the ford. A loss of strength begins to take place in the Queen's following, by men falling out from fatigue, and by others deserting now that it has been whispered through the ranks that the king, with a powerful army, is only at the top of the Cotswold Hills just over yonder, and is likely to descend upon them at any hour. The rest, disappointed and disheartened,

gather what courage and strength they have and proceed towards Tewkesbury. They go by the old Roman Road which runs along by Severn side, and this leads them through the little village of Deerhurst, where they petition the sympathy and assistance of the friendly monks who hold the old Saxon church of Deerhurst.

At last the Queen reaches this ground, here, that borders Lower Lode Lane. It is towards the end of day : there are only two or three hours of daylight left, and the stragglers are still coming in, dead-beat for want of refreshment after a long, tiring walk over rough road-tracks. Wenlock thinks the passage of the Severn should be made at once. Somerset thinks to the contrary. He views the ground and, finding it favourable for bivouac and defence, declares it his determination " here to tarry and abide such fortune as God shall send."

Let us now place ourselves under command of King Edward, marching towards Bristol, whence news has reached him of Queen Margaret. He brings his army to within fifteen miles of that city, to the edge of the Cotswold Hills which, running up the county of Gloucester almost parallel with the Severn, give a magnificent view of the broad valley of this river, up which the Queen has started to march towards Gloucester. There is, upon the edge of the hill, not far from the small town of Chipping Sodbury, a fortress camp that was engineered by some ancient Briton or Roman before the history of this country began to be written down. It is still there with its ramparts and entrances, and in 1471, it is there ready to receive King Edward

and his army, who occupy it for one night. This is a very different army from the mixed crowd that accompany Margaret up the Severn Vale. These men are veterans of the long war; soldiers of many a fight, still fired by the elation caused by the victory they have recently won for their king at Barnet. They and their leader are as one. They know by this time that he is a powerful character and a general of the first order, and they have perfect faith in him. So, when they awake early in the morning on Sodbury Old Camp and are addressed by the king and told that the task lies upon them to overtake Margaret and her Frenchmen, they set forth with a strong determination to accomplish that purpose. At the high altitude of the hill-top, where now is a good road, they find a rough, but comparatively dry, track and, marching twenty miles without a break, they cross the valley of Stroud. At Stroud the Flemish weavers, who not long before came to settle here to teach the natives the way to turn their Cotswold wool into good cloth, turn out to gaze at them and give them such victuals and drink as are available. The same at Painswick, after passing through which village they come by Cranham to Birdlip, where their scouts report having seen Queen Margaret's army making its way from the closed gates of Gloucester. The whole army, as they come close to the abrupt edge of the hills in this locality, see both Gloucester and Tewkesbury in the distance, if not some trace of the rearguard of the enemy. They push on, stimulated by this view, and, descending into the valley, enter Cheltenham, a village of perhaps five hundred inhabitants (now the celebrated "GardenTown")

of 50,000). So far they have marched to-day about thirty-five miles, and are still eager, for, after taking refreshment and a little rest at Cheltenham, during which time information of the exact doings of the enemy has reached the King, they again shoulder arms and, completing one of the best forced marches in the history of war, they go across country by Stoke Orchard and set themselves down within immediate striking distance of Margaret's camp, and the news comes as a very unpleasant surprise to the Queen's generals that King Edward is himself resting at Fiddington, two miles away. To cross the river by the ford in face of the King's army is impossible. The King's good generalship forces the Queen to give battle on this side of the Severn, where no help from her Welsh friends can reach her.

What need to tell further the result of the fight that followed next morning? How the quick-tempered Somerset was drawn out as the result of a feigned retreat by a portion of the King's army under the command of his brother Richard, Duke of York; and how Somerset, being ambushed and defeated, returned to his trenches in a violent rage and struck his fellow-general, the Earl of Wenlock, dead, because he had not ventured out to his assistance. How dismay and confusion resulted in the Queen's army, followed by total defeat and flight and great slaughter, many being killed, some drowned in the Avon and some in the Severn, and the whole of the leaders upon the Queen's side taken prisoners, including Prince Edward, Margaret's son—all to be executed upon the morrow; even the Queen herself making but a temporary escape.

On the way up Lower Lode Lane we pass a narrow field still known as "The Bloody Meadow," and our minds engage themselves for a moment or two in the horrid imagination of the flying and pursuing combatants of the battle of Tewkesbury. It was as lovely a May day as that we are experiencing to-day, with the meads full of buttercups, and the blossom upon the apple-trees, and ah! as they lay in their camp, all unknowing the fate that awaited them upon the morrow, did they not hear that sound we now hear? What is it — that prolonged, sweet, shrill sound that sets the air vibrating and floods the battlefield, then stops an instant and breaks forth once more in sobs and ends in a trill of liquid music? It is a nightingale — not the one, but such an one as sang to the warriors before the battle, and such an one as has always sung at Tewkesbury in May, from the most remote limits of the history of this land down to our time. We have reached the top of the lane where the finger-post points the way to Gloucester and Cheltenham, and before us rises the great tower of Tewkesbury Abbey, its calm grey exterior presenting much the same aspect as it must have borne upon the day of the battle and for hundreds of years before. The stars are now appearing in the sky and the meadows growing dim in the gathering shades of night, but the tower looms up a still conspicuous object, challenging attention, whilst the air palpitates with the ravishing notes of the warbling bird. That tower makes a claim upon us, even as the song of the nightingale. It, too, is old. Child has followed parent through twenty generations since it was built. Perhaps it represents some permanent idea which is natural

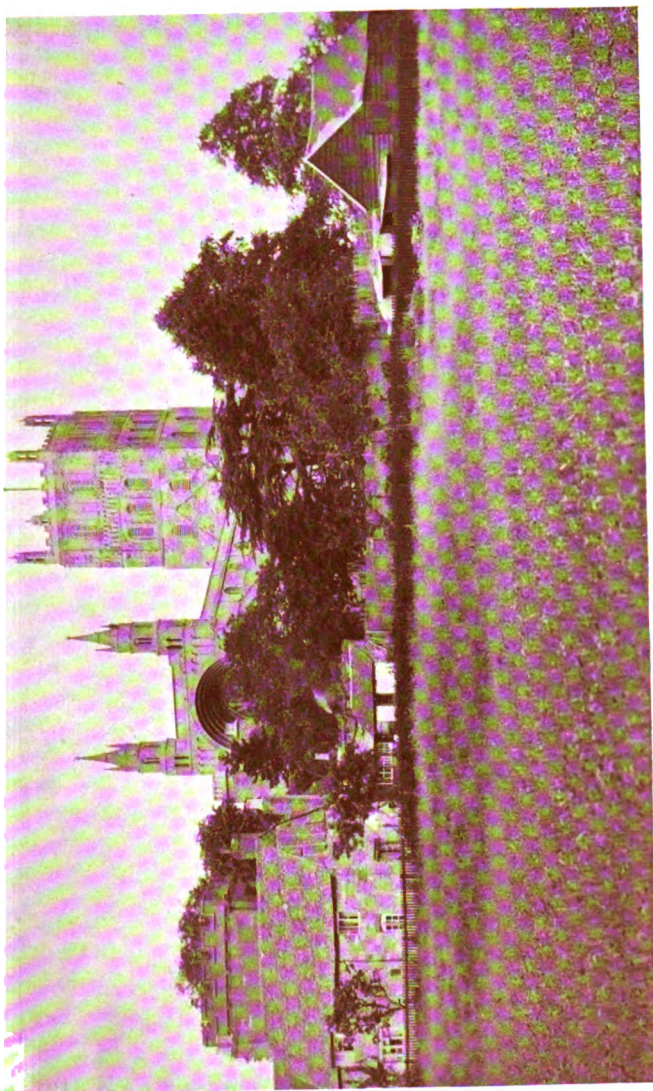
to mankind as the song to the bird, for is it not that religion is a kind of man-song which everybody really sings, only in different keys and sometimes badly, or out of tune for want of voice and ear?

MY LOVE, IT IS A SUMMER DAY

Now golden buttercups o'erflood
 With wealth the meads and closes,
 And rosy children from the wood
 Bring home fine bluebell posies;
 The lilac lights the lawn, the may
 Is spread in fragrant masses;
 My Love, this is a Summer day,
 Joy in it ere it passes.

The nightingales to lovers tell
 All night their tender story;
 At dawn the throistle, clear as bell,
 Pipes through his repertory;
 The mid-day larks lilt loud their lay,
 From heaven their gladness voicing:
 My Love, this is a Summer day,
 Let us, too, be rejoicing.

To present time your heart attune,
 Nor sorrow without reason;
 It snows in Winter, but in June
 It is the sunny season.
 Then let us with the flowers be gay,
 With birds our songs remember:
 My Love, this is a Summer day;
 Save sighing till December.



Buttercup Time.

Tewkesbury.

CHAPTER II

TEWKESBURY ABBEY

ONE of the most material ways in which the religious idea has manifested itself is in the erection of temples. Man is not satisfied with Nature's great temple, the boundless vault of the universe; he wants more; he wants to exercise his constructive faculties — to express in a practical way his reverence to the deity to whom he looks up. He cannot build a universe, but he can build a cathedral or a church; so he turns from the empyrean vault with all its stars, and sets up stone arches, and adorns his temple after his own artistic tastes, and accommodates it to the methods of his religion.

Such a temple is Tewkesbury Abbey, which has stood where it stands for eight hundred years, arousing in the minds of all those who through the ages have looked upon it, a sympathy with the religious idea of its founder, and awakening an appreciation of the exalting and exalted art called forth in its builders as they designed and executed this great church with its many adornments.

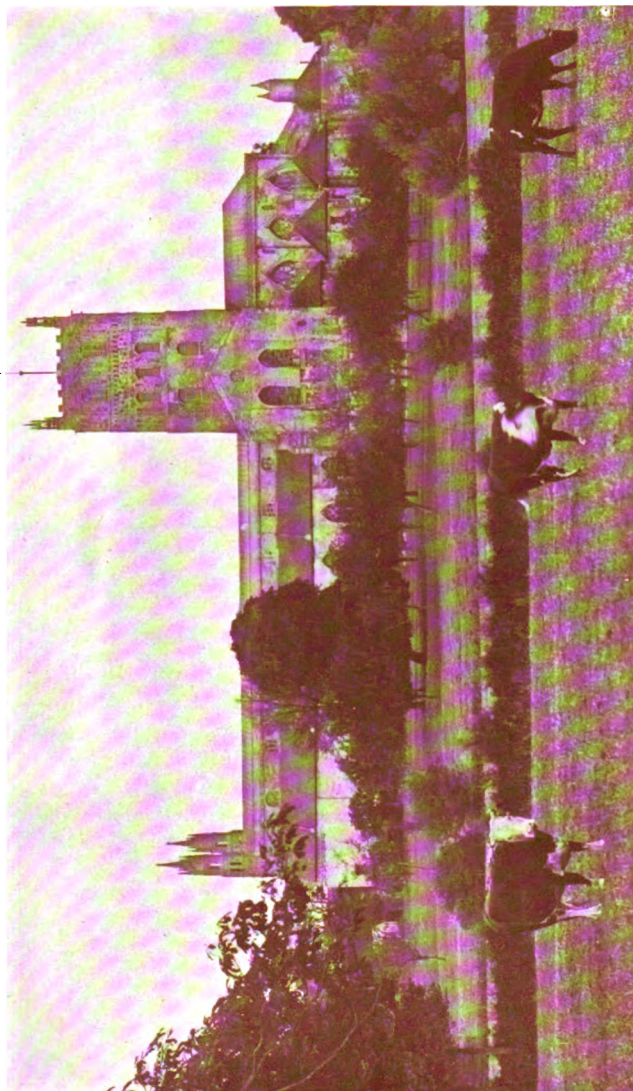
A hermit, they say, from whose name, Theoc or Theokus, the name of Tewkesbury (Theokesbyrig) is derived, established himself here, and this was the commencement of the religious institution. His cell was enlarged into a church, by two brother earls of Saxon

Mercia named Odda and Dodda, about the year 715, and Brithric, king of Wessex, having been poisoned by accident or design by his wife Eadburgha, daughter of Offa the Terrible, was the first notable person known to have found sepulture within the walls of the church, A. D. 800.

Presently those great church and castle builders, the Normans came in, and then arose the present Abbey of Tewkesbury.

Robert Fitz-Hamon had married the niece of William the Conqueror, and on account of this connection obtained a goodly share of English property, which ultimately included the lordship of Tewkesbury and earldom of Gloucester. Apparently in close imitation of the example set by King William I., Fitz Hamon led a buccaneering expedition into South Wales, where under the pretext of assisting one Welsh chieftain against another, he conquered and annexed a considerable portion of their country, dividing the territory so acquired amongst his followers, only retaining for himself some important portions including the castle of Cardiff. According to Welsh annals he was responsible for many atrocities committed upon the inhabitants of Glamorganshire and the neighbouring counties.

It is also recorded of him that he destroyed a great church at Bayeux in France, and he is supposed to have endeavoured to expiate these and perhaps other crimes by building Tewkesbury Abbey. A typical fighting, praying Norman doubtless he was, and like many of his descendants and successors who are buried in the abbey, he came to a violent death, being killed in an



The Abbey.

Tewkesbury.

assault upon the French town of Falaise in 1107, when his abbey, to which his body was brought for interment, had been about seven years in the building. He had no son to inherit his name, but left a daughter named Mabel to inherit his goods, and three other daughters, Cicely, Hawise, and Amice or Avice.

Fitz-Hamon's daughter and heiress, Mabel, married a natural son of King Henry I., by name Robert, who took the surname of Fitz-Roy, and it was under him that the abbey was completed.

In the ancient Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester reference is made to the courtship of Mabel by Robert Fitz-Roy:—

“ ‘Sir,’ shee saide, ‘ich wote your herte upon me is,
More for myne heritage than for myself I wis:
And such heritage as ich have, hit weer to me greet shame
To take a lorde, but he hadde any surname.’ ”

“ ‘Damoseill,’ quoth the kinge, ‘thou seest well in this case,
Sir Robert Fitz-Hayme thy fader’s name was,
As fair a name he shall have as you shall see,
Sir Robert le Fitz-Roy shall his name be:’
‘Damoseill,’ he sayde, ‘thi lorde shall have a name
For him and for his heires fayre without blame:
For Robert, erle of Gloucester his name shall be, and is,
He shall be erle of Gloucester, and his heires I wis—’
‘Inne this form.’ quoth shee, ‘ich wote that all my thyng be his.’ ”

The lady’s suspicion of Fitz-Roy appears to have been ill-founded, as he faithfully carried out the trust of finishing the building of Tewkesbury Abbey, and saw it consecrated in 1123. The ceremony of the consecration has been described by a writer¹ upon the abbey as follows:—

¹ The Rev. J. H. Blunt: *Tewkesbury Abbey and its Associations.*

"All were assembled without the Church, one solitary deacon standing within at the closed door of the grand porch. Then a great procession was formed in the cloisters, a stalwart monk for cross-bearer at its head, goodly esquires bearing the banners of the founders, singing boys in surplices, and singing men in surplices and copes, lay monks from many a neighbouring religious house in their several degrees, those of Tewkesbury following last, and last of them the venerable abbot, who, like the bishop, survived the day but a few months. Then, doubtless, came the Earl and his countess, attended by many a squire and lady, and with them perhaps two other daughters of Fitzhamon, Cicely, Abbess of Shaftesbury, and Avice, Abbess of Wilton, each with such a retinue of nuns in white whimples as was fitting for dignified ecclesiasticesses. Last of all came the monastic clergy of the Abbey, and those of adjacent houses, the secular-canon, the archdeacons and the deans, the attendant bishops with their chaplains, and the halting, aged father, Bishop Theulf, on whom the chief duty of the day rested."

"Three times the procession wound its slow way round the outer walls of the church, singing such psalms as 'Let God arise and let his enemies be scattered;' all the bishops as they went sprinkling the blessed water upon the building. Each time that the bishop of the Diocese arrived at the porch again, the strains ceased while he knocked thrice at the door with his pastoral staff, saying, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and let the King of Glory come in.' The response being heard like a faint echo from the deacon within—'Who is the King of Glory?' At the third knock on the third arrival there, the doors flew open as the bishop gave the word—'Even the Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory;' and he then headed the procession as it moved forward, chanting, 'Peace be unto this house and to all that shall dwell therein. Blessing be given unto them in their coming in and in their going out;' and all the people said, 'Amen.' "

The Abbey in the course of its after history required reopening upon one occasion, and upon another rededication. The reopening was after the churches in England had been closed by an interdict of the pope for six years as a punishment for disobedience to his authority. The rededication was after the battle of Tewkesbury, when the abbey itself was the scene of

fighting and murderous bloodshed, and was deemed to be polluted and desecrated.

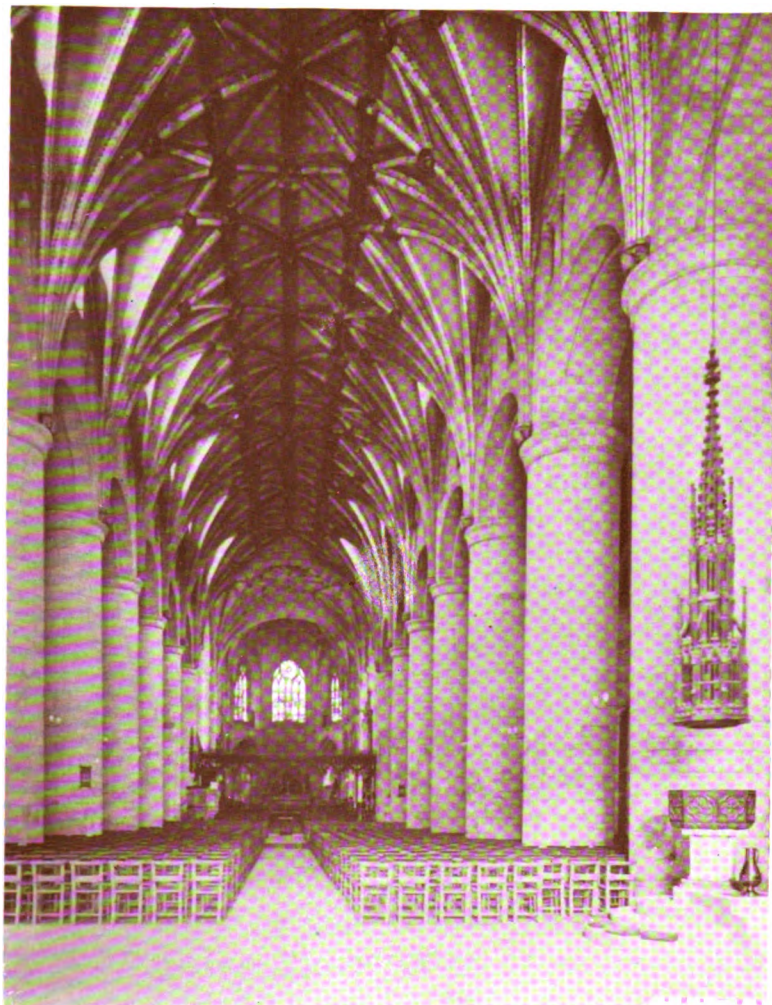
The large Benedictine monastery connected with the Abbey flourished for 430 years, during which it was presided over by a succession of six-and-twenty abbots. At the end of that time came the suppression of all the monasteries by Henry VIII., and the very general destruction of the abbeys connected with them. The monastery at Tewkesbury disappeared, and the Abbey very narrowly escaped destruction, being held to be superfluous, and only being permitted to remain for use as a parish church, upon the petition of the Tewkesbury townspeople, and the payment to the king of a sum equivalent to that which he would have derived from the sale of the lead upon the roof and other material upon the demolition of the building, and which amounted to a sum equal to between £4,000 and £5,000 in our money.

The callousness of the king's commissioners is amazing, though their report as to the belongings of the Abbey is a business-like document. The preamble of the warrant demanded everything to be given up to the use of "Our most dread Sovereign Lord, Henry VIII. by the Grace of God King of England and France, Defender of the Faith, Lord of Ireland, and, in earth, immediately under Christ, Supreme head of the Church of England."

The annual income of the Abbey was returned as £1,595. 15. 6, money then (1539) representing about ten times the value it has at the present. The Commissioners' inventory of things pertaining to the Abbey included a great array of buildings, some of which were

reserved and placed in the keeping of a responsible person, acting on behalf of the king. Others were deemed superfluous, as, for instance, "the Church, with chapel, cloisters, chapter-house; the two dormitories, infirmary with chapel and lodgings within the same; the workhouse with another house adjoining to same; the convent kitchen; the library; the old hostery; the chambers lodgings; the new hall; the old parlour adjoining the Abbot's lodging; the cellarer's lodging; the poulter house, the gardner, the almary, and all the other houses and lodgings not reserved." There were reserved for the king's majesty, besides buildings, lead remaining upon sundry roofs estimated at 180 foders (1 foder = 2,400 lbs.); bells, eight poise (14,600 lbs.); two mitres garnished with gilt, rugged pearls and counterfeit stones; plate-silver gilt, 329 oz.; silver, parcel gilt, 605 oz.; silver, white, 487 oz.; one cope of silver tissue with one cles and one tunicle of the same, one cope of gold tissue with one cles and two tunicles of the same.

Even when a good retiring annuity had been given to the abbot, and something considerably less to other of the inmates of the Abbey, a clear annual income of over £1,000, equal to £10,000 in our money, remained to the king, besides other property and privileges before belonging to the Abbey, including the advowson to 31 church livings in various parts of the country. But this was only one monastery; there were hundreds of others great and small, all similarly treated, and their money and property, which previously had been used, to a great extent, for charitable purposes, were diverted to the private use of the dread Sovereign Lord Henry VIII., king, etc., etc.



The Abbey.
(Interior.)

Tewkesbury.

So the monastic buildings were, in the main, swept away, only a small portion, which has been converted into a dwelling, and the gatehouse remaining; but the Abbey was saved, and has served as the parish church of Tewkesbury ever since the dissolution, now between three and four hundred years. Here it stands to-day, its nave rather too long for its height — the original roof was higher; its choir well-proportioned and beautified by its clustering chapels; its west end very peculiar, the end wall being almost entirely taken up by a great arch with semicircular top, containing a large window and doorway, the window being recessed by seven gradations, in the thickness of the wall, which is surmounted on either side of the arch by a turret; its Norman tower, broad, and moderately high, but high enough to express an extraordinary dignity, and sufficiently ornamental to prevent a too great severity. It is a fine tower.

Through the iron gate of the Abbey-yard, and beneath the plain porch with its heavy door, the Abbey is entered, the entrance being towards the west extremity of its nave. From this end of the church the appearance of the interior is most happily revealed. The view extends through the long nave to the end of the choir without interruption. The nave is purely Norman, being flanked with heavy, round columns, supporting plain round-topped arches; the roof, of later date, is finely vaulted, the groins springing from heads above the capitals of the great columns, and spreading upwards in numerous ribs to intersect across the summit of the roof, each intersection being marked by a carved and gilded boss. The grand

monotony of the great pillars and arches, ending with the massive piers supporting the tower, are most impressive. Beyond is the choir, the upper part of which, rebuilt in the early decorated style of the 14th century, makes a pleasing termination to the vista, with its Gothic windows filled with ancient stained glass; of these there are seven round the choir apse. There are short transepts to the right and left of the tower, giving the church a cruciform shape, and there are two narrow aisles, one on either side the nave, stone-vaulted in a pleasingly simple manner. The interior of the east end of the Abbey is uncommon and especially interesting. The choir apse does not end the church, the walls in which the seven choir windows are placed being supported by low Gothic arches springing from Norman columns; and, beyond these arches, is a broad walk forming a semi-circular aisle or ambulatory which passes round behind the end of the choir. The roof of this, and the roofs of the chapels that lean against it encircling the choir, are at a lower level than the choir windows, and so do not obstruct the light from them. On either side of the ambulatory, that is, at the entrances to the chapels on the one hand, and in the space of the arches between the ambulatory and the choir on the other hand, are placed several monumental tombs, chantries or chaplets. In fact here, and in the choir itself, lie buried and commemorated many of the former lords and ladies of Tewkesbury and some of the abbots. From earliest Church times it has been the custom to bury the great patrons and local dignitaries in the church, and the burying-places are often marked by finely carved monuments.



The Beauchamp Chapel.
Tewkesbury Abbey.

In one era the fashion also arose of building little chapels or chantries over or near the grave, in which prayers for the departed might be said. The ambulatory round the choir of Tewkesbury Abbey is full of these monuments. The designs and execution of the stone carvings are often of an exquisite kind, and seem to be successful examples of that expression of feeling which mankind appears to require to exercise in connection with his holiest aspirations. Perhaps nothing more beautiful has ever been executed in stone than some of the tabernacle work and tracery which these monuments exhibit. No mark upon any one of them tells us the name of the artist who wrought it. Probably he lived in the monastery, and was unknown either in life or death by a more pretentious appellation than "brother John" or "brother Thomas."

The chief monuments to which the above reference applies are the Despencer Monument which shows one of the Despcncers and his wife lying in effigy, carved in alabaster upon a pannelled entablature beneath a beautiful canopy, all richly carved. The Beauchamp or Warwick Chapel, a complicated and exquisite work in stone-carving. The chantry or chapel of the founder of the Abbey, and that in memory of Sir Edward Despencer. The monument of Sir Guy de Brien, the tombs of some of the abbots, and particularly the cenotaph of Abbot Wakeman. This exhibits a lovely design which seems more nearly related to the carving of the time of Henry VI. than that of Henry VIII., in whose reign Wakeman lived. The beauty of the carving is in contrast with the figure carved upon the tomb, which is an emaciated corpse

over which loathsome animals are creeping, and seems to represent Death rather than the man to whose memory the monument is raised.

We look at the monuments and then come again into the nave of the Abbey, and, finding seats where the light falls through the coloured glass of the windows around, sit awhile to muse upon the lives of the lords and ladies, men and women, whose ashes lie in and about the choir, and of that long past history of England with which they are connected. For four hundred years the lordship of Tewkesbury, with its local possessions, descended from one to another in a direct line from the founder of the Abbey, Robert Fitz-Hamon, though there came several changes of name into the succeeding generations by reason of the inheritance being carried on through a daughter for want of a son to bear the patronymic. Thus the marriage of Fitz-Hamon's daughter brought in Fitz-Roy. Two generations further, and a De Clare was admitted by marrying the heiress of the Fitz-Roy family. The name of De Clare was continued for about a century, when the male line again failing, the Despencers inherited by marrying into the family of De Clare; and their name was also maintained for about a hundred years. Amongst the De Clares and Despencers were several notable or notorious persons.

But, first of Isabel, grand-daughter of Fitz-Roy: The great estates of Fitz-Hamon fell to her, and they and the titles connected with them to the man who should marry her. Her first husband was John, surnamed Lackland, before he became King of England. It was this connection which brought King John into

close relationship with Tewkesbury, and it is probably true — as tradition tells — that he lived, for some part of his time, here. It is stated that he was here in the year 1200. When he became king he divorced Isabel, ostensibly on the ground of blood-relationship, she being his second cousin, but, being loth to part with her estates, he would only allow Geoffrey de Mandeville to marry her upon payment to him of a large sum; practically he sold her. As she had no children, she was followed in the ownership, when she died, by her sister who married Gilbert De Clare. This De Clare was a signatory to Magna Charta, as was also his kinsman, Richard De Clare, otherwise Richard Strongbow, who conquered Ireland in the reign of Henry II. A succeeding Gilbert De Clare of Tewkesbury was known as the "Red Earl," "because he was red and beautiful in appearance." In the barons' war of the time he sided first with Simon de Montfort, but luckily went over to the king's side before Simon's defeat and death at Evesham. His attachment to King Edward I. was rewarded by his being given the king's daughter, Jean d'Acre, to wife; though, in order to compass this desirable union, he had to divorce the wife he already possessed, after twenty-three years of wedded life with her. The King, as appears to have been the wont of kings at that time, made something by the match, as De Clare had lent him money on account of the war; and, being unable to immediately repay in cash, he offered his daughter. This red-haired and beautiful earl, being offended by the words or acts of a lordly neighbour in Herefordshire, took a force into the domain of the latter, and returned with heavy plun-

der. Of another Tewkesbury De Clare the story is told that, upon his estate, a Jew fell into a pit of mud upon a Saturday, and would not break the Jewish Sabbath by allowing himself to be pulled out. The following day, being the Christian Sabbath, Lord De Clare forbade the Sabbath to be broken by his being pulled out. This negative act was not entirely in keeping with the spirit of Christianity, and, on the Monday morning, the man was dead. The last of the De Clares was another Gilbert De Clare; he was son of the princess and grandson of Edward I. His grave in the Abbey was opened about forty years ago, and the skeleton revealed showed him to have been a man of large frame. Like his forerunners he was a fighter, and met his end at the Battle of Bannockburn, where the English were so badly beaten by the Scots under Bruce.

The weak king, Edward II., had two boon favourites, Piers Gaveston and Hugh Despencer. This Despencer was the first lord of Tewkesbury who bore that name. It was an age of quarrels, jealousy, and intrigue; and both Gaveston and Despencer came to violent ends at the hands of those who felt themselves outraged at the king's preference for these men. Probably by the orders of Queen Isabella and her paramour, Roger Mortimer, Despencer was hanged and quartered at Hereford, but his remains were brought to Tewkesbury for burial by his wife.

The following possessions cited as belonging to Hugh Despencer, give an idea of what riches consisted of in those days: 59 manors, 28,000 sheep, 1,000 oxen, 1,200 kine, 40 mares, 160 horses, 2,000 hogs, 3,000

bullocks, 40 tuns of wine, 600 bacons, 80 carcasses of Martinmass beef, 600 muttons in the larder, 10 tuns of cider, 36 sacks of wool, a library of books, besides in armour, plate, jewels, and money to the value of £10,000. This Hugh Despencer left a son; and it is he and his lady whom the Despencer Monument in the Abbey memorializes. This last named Despencer died in 1349, and his wife married for second husband Guy de Brien, who was king's standard-bearer at the Battle of Crécy, and she saw a beautiful tomb in the Abbey erected also to him before she herself was buried by the side of her first husband.

The last of the Tewkesbury Despenchers died in 1414. Isabel Despencer, the then heiress, married Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Abergavenny and Worcester; and, he dying in 1422, his wife erected the Beauchamp Chapel in the Abbey to his memory. She then married a second Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and the Tewkesbury estates and title became merged in the greater ones of Warwick. Two generations on, the male line of the Beauchamps of Warwick were at an end, and Richard Neville became lord of Tewkesbury as well as Earl of Warwick by having married into the Beauchamp family. This Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, was none other than the Kingmaker of the Wars of the Roses. He had two daughters, one of whom was married to the Duke of Clarence, brother to Edward IV. Isabella, Duchess of Clarence, was buried at Tewkesbury by reason of her having inherited, from her father, the old property here; and when her husband was murdered in the tower by order of his inhuman brother, being drowned in a butt of Malmsey

wine on account of his fondness for that beverage, his remains were brought to be laid by the side of his wife in the vault behind the altar at Tewkesbury. The other daughter of the King-maker, Anne Neville, first married to Prince Edward, son of Henry VI., for her second husband married Richard, Duke of Gloucester, brother to Edward IV., who afterwards became Richard III. Prince Edward, her first husband, is also buried beneath the floor of this Abbey, though it was the ill chance of his being killed here after the Battle of Tewkesbury, and not his connection with the Earl of Warwick which caused him to be laid here to rest; and somewhere near him were probably buried the leaders in his unfortunate mother's army, Somerset, Wenlock and others, though the exact spot of their burial is not known.

So the old Abbey guards the remains of many specimens of English leaders of the old blood, from the Norman Conquest onward. Every one of these took part in the joys and troubles of his age. Some there were who went to the Crusades and returned; some who assisted their king in the protection and acquisition of territory, as they were bound to do when called upon under the feudal system; and some fought for liberty and some for life, and a large portion of them came by a violent and unnatural death; and now their lives and all connected with them form history of the long ago, which we read with an interest something like that begot of a fairy tale.

There is a modern monument — of recent erection in the Abbey — to a writer of romances, and this awakens more sympathy in us than all the others,



The Author of "John Halifax—Gentleman."
 Tewkesbury Abbey.

it is so much nearer to our present life. The monument is to Mrs. Craik, writer of several stories, and particularly of that Tewkesbury story of a strong man in his family life — "John Halifax — Gentleman." The memorial is in the form of an upright slab, carved in relief in renaissance design, with a medallion vignette of the authoress surrounded by figures emblematic of love, purity and truth, and a dove with olive branch representing peace. It is a fine face, with a carved head-dress of lace, a tasteful and womanly adornment adding its grace to the portrait which, together with some remembrance of her style of writing — sympathetic, broad-viewed and free from craze — appeals as representing a type of womanhood properly honoured by a monument in this house of the ages.

The Abbey is a standing witness, not only of the permanence through all vicissitudes of the religious idea which led to its erection, but also of the changes wrought by time in the estate of humanity. The world has progressed since the times of those first pages of English history, with which the earlier history of Tewkesbury Abbey keeps pace. Civilization has made some way and men are less savage than of old.

It is pleasant to view the Abbey from without, especially in the month of May when our acquaintance with Tewkesbury and the Avon commences. There is a footpath running from the Gloucester Road by the Swilgate Brook into Gander Lane, and along this footpath some admirable views of the Abbey are obtained, including the whole broadside length of the building. The meadows are very peaceful, and full of buttercups on a May morning. There are

sounds of singing birds, and the cry of a cuckoo coming from near the farm on the top of the slope. Some cattle are browsing near at hand, and, moved by curiosity, presently come staring and blowing near to us in a friendly way, not objecting to our sharing, for a time, the pleasure and plenty of their indolent lives in this flowery mead. The newly-arrived swifts fly past with lightning speed, uttering their screams of joy, or rise and wheel above the Abbey under the sky, which shows pale blue through clouds thinly blown like a fine curtain across it. Sober and silent stands the great, grey church, man's work that seems so much longer lasting than man himself, unless he be taken in the aggregate; and ever and anon the bells boom out their chime, telling of time that passes without ceasing, sending the thoughts back again down the long past, and into the dim, brief future of our individual lives.

THE ABBEY CLOCK

The great clock that looks grandly and solemnly down
From its place in the old abbey tower,
Measures time as it passes in Tewkesbury Town,
And rings out a full chime at each hour;
For it marks on its face with unfaltering pace,
Each brief minute before it is sped,
And the people look up to the abbey clock's face
From beyond the green place of the dead.

In the morning the sound of its silvery tune
Wakes the maid from her indolent dream,
And the hind counts the hours through the dull afternoon
As he ploughs with his work-heated team;
And the haymaker waits for the dinner he eats
Till the noon-stroke is heard in the mead;
The tired shopkeeper gladly the curfew hour greets,
And he gives its command ready heed.

There's a due time to question, and one to reply,
One to hasten or tarry awhile;
There's a time to affirm, and a time to deny,
And the clock marks the time on its dial;
And the wise will take heed and turn time to their need,
Ere it passes forever away,
For too late is to-morrow to do to-day's deed,
Since the clock's hands go round but one way.

From the dawn until darkness the lapse of life's time
Is thus published in hearing and sight;
In dim chapel and chancel resounds the clear chime,
As if spirits were speaking at night.
The gilt hands never wait, but point early and late
Heavenward now—then to where the dead lie,
And this last is one step through the abbey-yard gate,
From the street where the living go by.

CHAPTER III

UP THE AVON TO TWYNING AND BREDON

JUST above the old Avon bridge at Tewkesbury, are the boathouses, and to them we wend our way, for to-day we start on our voyage up the Avon. There are numerous people upon the landing-stage; the day is fine and several companies of friends have come into Tewkesbury for a water picnic upon the Avon, and this gathering consists of pleasure-seekers waiting to get afloat in rowing boats, or in one of the little steam launches here to be hired. The bright colours of cotton and silk, flannel and flowers and feathers, in blouse and shirt and hat and parasol; the water flashing with reflections of the sun between green banks, and the voices and light laughter of the people make a gay and joyous scene. There are various styles of people here, offering good material for critical eyes and reflective minds; but boat after boat being brought alongside the landing-stage, the several parties are soon afloat, and we, afloat with the rest, make our way over the gleaming water, up-stream. The current of the Avon is not a strong one, and the peculiar pleasure that comes of gliding through still water is, therefore, ours without too much labour.

The mowing-grass is still uncut in the meadows on either side, and contains all the summer flowers, and the reeds and rushes by the river banks are springing

up fresh and tender, for the summer is yet young. The Mythe Hill is on our left with its pleasant house facing towards the river, and as the bridges and mills and houses of Tewkesbury go out of sight, and the Abbey tower grows distant and small behind us, Bredon Hill rises into view away in front, looming more and more distinctly in our vision as we proceed.

To Bredon Hill we shall come in time, and shall see much of it, as it is in sight for half the distance up to Stratford. But it is to Twyning that we, with everyone else, are first making our way, and presently we see the church of this village, situated half a mile from the river across the fields, for Twyning consists of several ends, only one of which is near the river; where the church stands is "Church-End," of course. Even the name of Twyning implies a duplication; it means "two meadows," in fact. The part of Twyning towards which everyone is steering is Twyning Fleet; the last word signifies that there is a ferry there, where you can *fleot*, or float, over. There is a large vessel there for conveying horses and vehicles across, as at the Lower Lode, and an inn, The Fleet Inn, with a little rose-garden in front of it. In this garden, at the commencement of the season, the proprietor puts up a tent wherein those who come in boats may regale themselves with tea. Twyning Fleet is two and a half miles up from Tewkesbury, a convenient distance for rowing for those who are out for the afternoon, as, for instance, those gay and youthful spirits who come from the fashionable town of Cheltenham. The Cheltonians go to Tewkesbury to do their boating and, generally preferring the Avon to the Severn,

get up as far as Twyning. Most of the smart people on the river to-day are from Cheltenham. There are three boats containing four people apiece, making together a party of a dozen. There was an argument amongst them at starting as to who should get off first, and now they are racing each other, those who started last trying to get in front of the others. The lady who holds the rudder-lines in one of the boats is a little uncertain in her steering, with the result that the prow of that boat goes amongst the young rushes and grasses and touches the bank. They push off again but the other party rows past them with expressions of well-feigned derision. Then the poor steerswoman is blamed by the rowers of her own boat, who say she ought to have kept on the other side. She implores to be informed of the right side upon which to pass people on the river, and learns that most people keep to the right in meeting and give the other party the bank they are nearest in passing them by.

All go ashore at Twyning Fleet. In front of the inn, above the garden with its tea-tent, is the most noticeable feature of the locality, which is the view across the Avon. The river with its ferry, and the road coming down to the river-side on the opposite shore, make the foreground of this picture, while, three-quarters of a mile away, Bredon church-spire rises near a great grey-tiled tithe-barn, accompanied by a farm and the parson's house, all thrown into high relief by the dark side of Bredon Hill, which makes a most effective background. From a stile at the end of the lane on the opposite side of the river, a footpath runs towards the church diagonally across a sixty-acre



Threatening Weather at the Fleet.

Twynning Fleet, Gloucestershire.

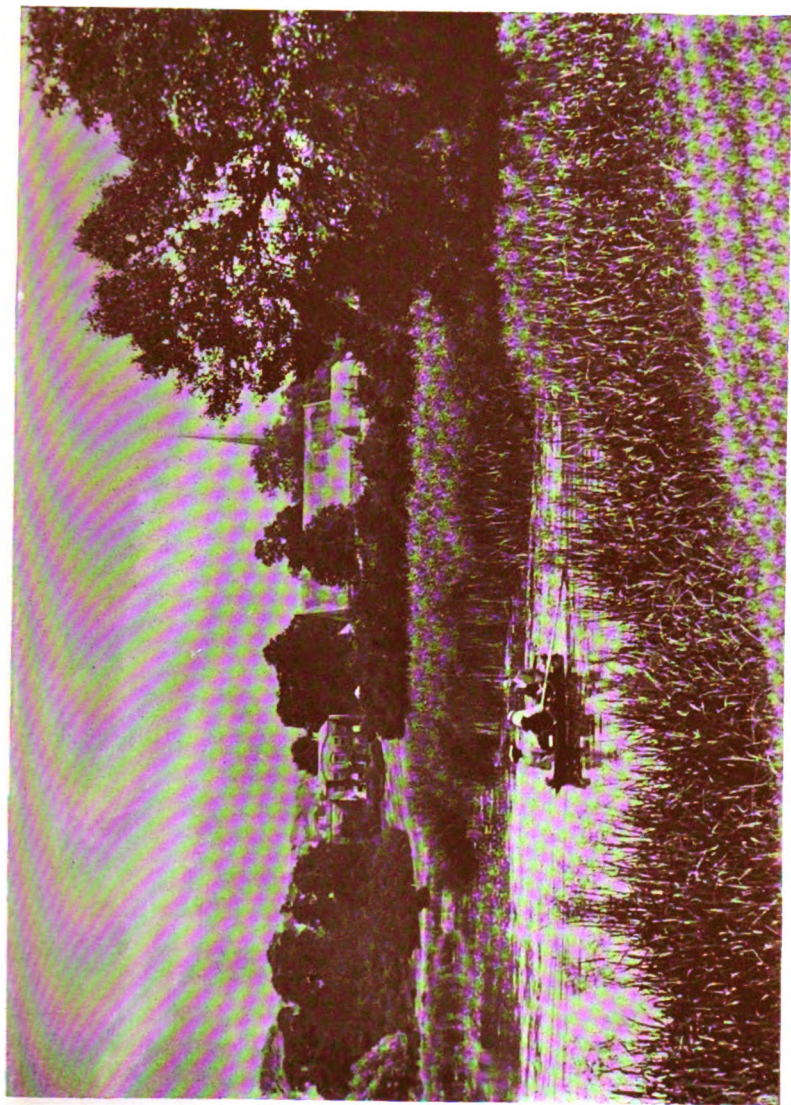
meadow, and leads the eye from the Avon side to the distant scene. It is a fine scene at any time, whether it be clear or cloudy; in the morning when the sun comes up, or in the evening when the moon rises above the hill into the picture; with the flowers in the meadow as now, or later when a herd of cattle gives it life and colour, or even in winter when the landscape is white with hoar-frost or snow.

The lane behind the Fleet Inn quickly leads to Twyning Green. This is a good-sized village-green with a few farms and other buildings about its borders, and with numerous well-grown trees upon it. Some ducks are enjoying the muddy moisture of the willow-shaded ditch that runs across it, and a donkey grazes in one corner. Opposite the village school, in the chequered shade of a plane-tree, the schoolmaster, with a fiddle at his chin, is acting the part of leader to a drum and fife band, made up of his boys. He has brought his school out into the air, upon this summer day, for a break in their more ordinary studies, and they are improving themselves under the plane in the cult of St. Cecilia. The narrow lane beyond the Green runs between close hedges round to Twyning Church End, and there is a way back by a footpath through the meadows which makes a pleasant walk. "Maud, Queen to King William the Conqueror, gave these lands to John the Chamberlain." The Queen was very liberal to John, and one can but hope that she was not giving away other people's property.

The boating parties saunter up the lanes to Twyning Church End, and Twyning Hill End, or play a game of rounders upon Twyning Green, and then come

back to the tent in the inn garden for tea, and grow hilarious over the cake and jam before again taking to their boats. The more energetic may row a little further up the river to Bredon before returning; it depends upon whether they have to catch the train at Tewkesbury to get home, or whether they drove there in a brake or motor-car, or came on bicycles — the latter being methods of travelling which would render them independent of trains. Sometimes the weather changes, and a summer storm causes them to wait awhile at the Fleet Inn, when they amuse themselves by making additional thunder in the skittle-alley. There is a saying that "life is not all beer and skittles," but that combination of delights may be enjoyed here for a spell, which should be an attraction, though some people prefer to take the skittles without the beer. It is in great part a matter of taste. There is another noisy and somewhat frivolous game called "Up Jenkins," which is played upon the trestle tables of the tea-tent, by persons of all ages and conditions, when waiting for the passing of Jupiter Pluvius at Twyning.

We leave Twyning and find that a short distance above the Fleet the Avon turns for Bredon, and comes close up to the village, so that nothing separates the rector's house from the river excepting a garden, and a narrow strip of meadow. The nearness of the church to the hill, as viewed from Twyning Fleet, proves to have been but apparent, as the village is some distance from the hill in reality. The lane up from the river brings you quickly into the vicinity of the church, which is greatly beautified by surrounding trees. The fir-trees in the churchyard are particularly effective



Bredon.

Bredon, Worcestershire.

in this respect. The Scotch fir, notwithstanding its rugged habit of growth, is usually an artistic object in the landscape in which it has place. Though stiff, in trunk and dark in foliage it holds up its head superbly, breaking the sunlight in a pleasant manner, or stubbornly defying the storm.

Bredon Church is of as ancient a foundation as Tewkesbury Abbey. Eanulf, Offa, and Bertwulf were its Saxon patrons, and there was a monastery here to begin with. This, however, appears to have suffered decay at an early date, and it is questionable whether any remnant of the Saxon buildings remains in the present structure. Prior to the Norman conquest the manor of Bredon had fallen into the possession of the Bishop of Worcester, and the Bishops of that see had a park here, and held the place in possession, and the living in gift, for many hundreds of years. The present church is not of large size; it is part Norman and part early English in style. The handsomest feature about it is its main entrance porch, which is a fine example of Norman building, in perfect condition, its round arch, and a course in the church wall above it, being decorated with zig-zag ornamentation. Forming part of the floor of the chancel are some very ancient tiles, figured with the arms of church patrons, and to a pair of these patrons, Giles Reed and his wife Katherine Greville, there is an elaborate monument with reclining figures under a carved canopy of Jacobean age. The most interesting tomb, however, is that of Prideaux. It is but a simple grave in the chancel of the church, covered by a black marble slab, whereon is briefly and ingenuously recorded a

part of his remarkable history, which may be translated from the Latin to the following:

"John Prideaux, of Devonshire, born A.D. 1578, September 17, in the obscure village of Stoford, but of honest parents. He was elected first a Fellow and afterwards Rector of Exeter College, Oxford, which position he held for nearly 30 years; he occupied the chair of Regius Professor in Theology for more than 26 years, and five times reached the dignity of the Vice-Chancellorship of the same most celebrated University. He was spiritual attendant to Prince Henry, King James, and King Charles, by whom he was ultimately advanced to the Bishopric of Worcester (elected Nov. 22, consecrated Dec. 19, 1641, at Westminster). He died July 29, A.D. 1650, aged seventy-two."

Prideaux died a poor man at Bredon, misfortune having overtaken him in his latter days. Unlike the turncoat Vicar of Bray who, "whatsoever king may reign," would still "be Vicar of Bray, Sir," he was faithful to his Stuart patrons, and suffered at the hands of the Commonwealth under Cromwell, his bishopric being sequestered and himself retired upon the pittance of four shillings and sixpence a week. The rectory of Bredon, however, was held by his son-in-law, to whom the displeasure of the Parliament does not appear to have extended, and as this living was one of the richest in this part of the country, it may be that he was not so badly off as the insignificance of his own income represents, but that such a worthy should have been so abased is discreditable to those who arrayed themselves against the despotism of monarchy. The story has been handed down that, some time prior to the ex-bishop's death at Bredon, one met him carrying old iron to the village smith for sale, and asked him how he fared. He replied to the



Prideaux, Bishop of Worcester, died July 29, 1650.

Bishop Prideaux when Rector of Exeter College, Oxford.
(From an old print).

effect that he had fared upon his plate, till that was gone, and had then eaten a library of good books, afterwards much linen, some brass and a little pewter, and was now reduced to old iron, but upon what he would fare after that he was unable to tell.

The other thing of main interest at Bredon is the great barn, which is such a prominent object in the view from the river, and in size exceeds the church or any other building in its vicinity. The tithe, or tax on the lands of the parish for the support of the church, originally consisted of one tenth of the produce, which was paid in kind, and these great tithe-barns were built for the reception of the corn, etc., brought by the cultivators of the soil. The payment of tithes has, however, long since ceased to be made in kind, and is made in money now, the tax varying to some extent with the current price of corn. These great barns have consequently lost their original use and are, as a rule, much too large for the requirements of the farmer who has the use of them along with the land that lies nearest. Bredon was a rich living and the barn is proportionately large. As an architectural accomplishment it is of no mean merit, as it was built five hundred years ago, which would seem a fair length of life for a barn, and the walls and timbers are still substantially sound. The roof is supported partly upon a double row of oak pillars of great strength, which run down the length of the building, dividing the internal space like the pillars of a church, into a nave and side aisles. Externally it shows a fine grey colour, its roof more yellowed by the growth of lichens.

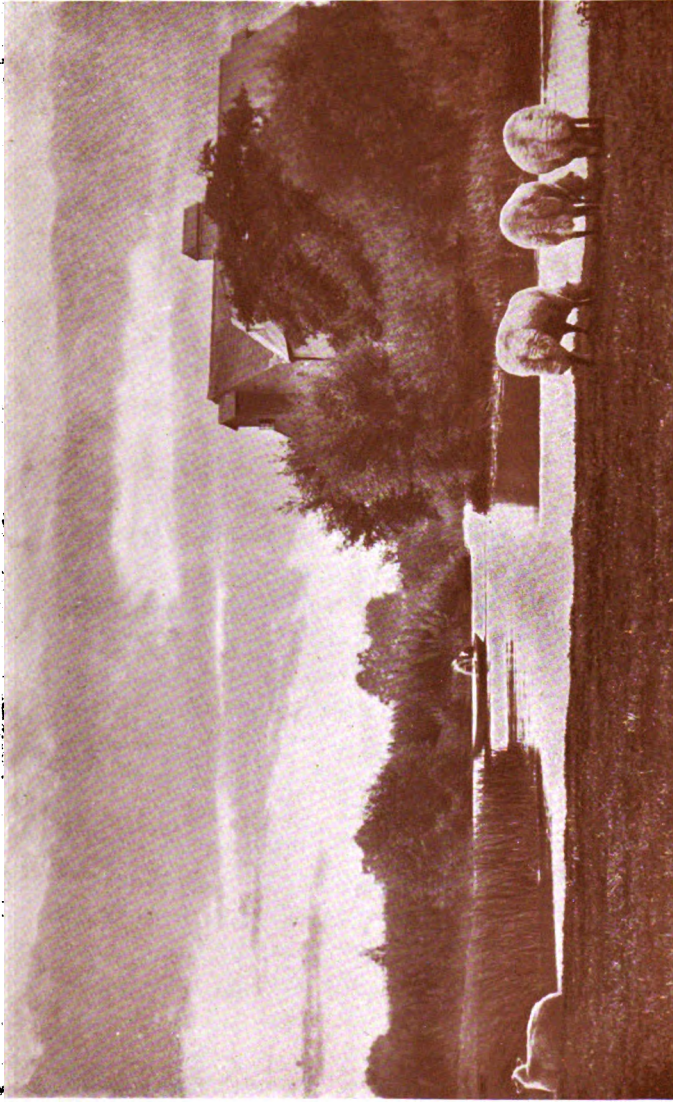
Bredon is but a small, rustic place, whose inhabi-

tants follow the even tenor of their way, untroubled by the burning questions which agitate the minds of town-dwellers. Perhaps, if the conditions of life under which they live result in the best obtainable bodily health, it would be hardly to their advantage to be disturbed by the latest political arguments, or religious questionings. They would be as happy if left alone with this great old barn and their older and most interesting church, whose Norman porch attracts our eyes again as we pass near the churchyard fence on our way back to the river and our boat. The very latest ideas both in architecture and religion are out of keeping with that arch; but it is an ancient and beautiful arch all the same, and the fact of its having stood so long a time without injury seems to give warrant to the supposition that it will stand for a long time yet.

THE STORM ON THE RIVER

Now the daylight
 Turns to greylight,
 And a cold gust sends a shiver
 Through the river reeds and rushes, and stirs the waiting trees;
 Clouds so dun, now
 Hide the sun, now
 There are rain-drops on the river,
 And the echo of the thunder rumbles loud along the breeze.

Be not sad, oh,
 For this shadow—
 Change of shine to showery weather;
 The cloud is needful to the earth, as to our life its pain;
 There's a warm rift
 In the storm-drift
 Showing sun and cloud together,
 And the wasting of the river is replenished by the rain.



Strensham Mill.

Strensham, Worcestershire.

CHAPTER IV

TO STRENSHAM, DEFFORD AND ECKINGTON

THE Avon turns away from Bredon and runs northward in one fairly straight stretch towards Strensham. The Tewkesbury picnickers are now left behind, some of them sitting upon the grass in a field near Bredon, where they have settled themselves for refreshment, consisting of many good things contained in tin cases and baskets which they have brought with them. These picnics — how pleasant and enjoyable they are in the Avonside meadows, and blessed is he or she who has been one in such a party as there we see sitting in a ring upon the grass, and who can feed thereafter upon the reminiscence of the delights experienced! There youth and beauty are met all on a summer day; youth in flannels with many-coloured jackets or “blazers,” and beauty in *piqué* or linen habits, or muslin blouses, and flower-trimmed hats with pretty, smiling faces beneath them. And the ladies cannot smile too much, or be too pretty, for is not the race dependent upon them to maintain its personal beauty? Perhaps some youth at the picnic would venture the utterance of such a suggestion, thinking to be complimentary, and you can almost hear the playfully sarcastic reply he gets from the bright-eyed object of his particular admiration: “It’s as well the maintenance of human beauty was not left to you men.” What, indeed,

would men at last become like, with all the labour, stress and exposure of their lives, which are so destructive of elegance and beauty, but for the inheritance in every generation of a fresh femininity from their mothers?

So we meditate as we row away from Bredon. The wind blows refreshingly in the face of the man in the stroke seat and shakes the trimmings of the lady's hat where she sits steering, and waves the willows and reeds of the river side, and bends forward the young rushes. The sun shines and it is very exhilarating under such circumstances to float away upon the sparkling river.

We approach Strensham Mill. A wooded hill rises close to the river on one side here, and the church tower of Strensham can be seen at the summit of this hill. There is a fine scene at the mill where the river widens out and the current caused by the weir water is considerable. The mill itself makes a peaceful picture as viewed from the bank across the water. Sheep are grazing on the bank and the ferryman is taking a passenger across the river some distance below the mill. This is the lower mill, for, two or three hundred yards higher up, can be seen a second mill, which bears the name of Eckington, and the first lock upon the Avon above Tewkesbury is situated there. The village of Strensham consists of scattered cottages, and one large house known as "The Court." This, however, is not the original great moated house of Strensham where the Russells of Strensham used to reside; that is gone, like the last of the Russell family. This family flourished for about four hundred years at Strensham. They



Samuel Butler, Author of "Hudibras."

Born at Strensham.

and the Hanfords of Wollas Hall, on Bredon Hill, were neighbours owning the land by the side of the river between them. Sometimes the two families intermarried, and sometimes the love was turned to hate, when they quarrelled and became spiteful towards each other. John Russell, Esquire, of Strensham, for instance, quarrelled with Thomas Hanford, Esquire, of Wollas Hall, and the pair of them, "by stopping the Avon to annoy each other, did grievous damage to their poor neighbours." Sir W. Russell, in the Civil War, was such a good royalist that he converted his place at Strensham into a garrison for the King. That was all well until the other party got the upper hand, when the outlook for Sir William and his friends grew dark, especially as this gentleman showed some recalcitrance when called on to submit to the successful side at the close of the war. However, in the end, he was forced to pay to Parliament a fine of £1800 down, and a perpetual penalty of £50 a year out of his estate. The alternative would, doubtless, have been the total loss of his property with, possibly, other punishment corporeal and condign. A generation or two further forward the Russells of Strensham came to an end by reason of the male line dying out. In Strensham church are a considerable number of monuments to members of this great Worcestershire family: the graven images of several of them are represented in soldier's dress. Two of the earliest of the knights, both dressed in chain mail, are figured in brass upon their flat gravestones.

A person who was much more by way of being a genius than either of the Russells was Samuel Butler,

author of "Hudibras." He was born at Strensham and baptised in the church here in 1612. His father rented a farm upon the Russell estate and was a churchwarden. Samuel Butler at first had some post in the household of the Russells or that of another prominent family in the neighbourhood, but, later on, went into service, as secretary, in the family of Sir S. Luke, a roundhead officer, and his observations whilst in this position seem to have afforded him the material for his most pungent satire. "Hudibras" is in rhyming verse, and although in some respects it hardly appeals to the reader of our time, many of its witty quips and phrases are familiar to everyone, having been subject to frequent quotation. It produced a greater political effect than any book of the age in which it was written, and its well-timed and, probably, well-deserved ridicule assisted in re-establishing the old form of government in place of the Commonwealth. The book was published in parts, some considerable interval taking place between the appearance of one part and another, and it must have been widely read, according to the education and taste for reading of the times. But although the country and the king owed much to Samuel Butler, he died in indigence in London, and was buried in a churchyard near Covent Garden. A monument was erected to his memory in Westminster Abbey, not, however, by king or public, but by his printer. In the church of Strensham he also has a memorial tablet.

There is no one in charge of the locks on the Avon and no toll to pay for their use: you open and shut the lock gates for yourselves and get through in the best way you can. From above Strensham lock runs a



The Backwater.

Strensham.

fine piece of back-water down to Strensham Mill to overflow at the weir. If you wish for half an hour of undisturbed quietude in the company of Nature you may take your boat into this water and let her lie against the bank in a shady spot for that space of time. Here, upon the placid surface, lie lily leaves, and the leaves of the arrow-head stand up out of the water, whilst along the edge of the osier-covered island that lies between the back-water and the proper course of the river grow masses of meadow-sweet, the large white convolvulus, purple loosestrife and other flowers. Small warbling birds people the osiers and nest there. A dove flies away from the head of a pollard willow, surprised at such an unwarranted intrusion into her solitude, and one of us pulling himself up to the top of the tree sees the two white eggs lying upon the few sticks and dry grass roots that serve to make her simple nest. On the rough and rarely-trodden path that courses its tangled way along the edge of the island we see a remnant of feathers, marking the place where a fox has taken a meal. He probably has his lair in the thick of the osiers, and some neighbouring farm-yard is a chicken the less for the rascally deed committed by reynard. The fate of the poor fowl was cruel and pitiful and was not at all what Master Man intended it to be, for the fowl was intended to be eaten upon a table, with bread-sauce and other accompaniments, and was cheated of so respectable an end. The fox might, however, argue that, although the idea of roast fowl is a pretty one, and not so unpractical as many of the ideas that emanate from the fanciful minds of men, he still prefers to follow the simple dictates of

Nature and to eat the fowl while the man is thinking of lighting the fire.

A mile above Strensham Lock, Defford railway bridge comes into sight in front, crossing the river high above the water. It makes, with its trellised iron-work, a not inartistic adjunct to the river landscape, and the passage over it of the trains of the Midland Railway sends the thoughts, for an instant, to the busy cities of Birmingham and Bristol, which this line unites. The travellers by the train, in their turn, get a momentary glimpse of the green river which, at this point, gives a sharp turn back towards Bredon Hill. The lanes that run by Defford Station, close by here, to Strensham and Croome, pass an undulating country of cornfields, beyond which the Malvern Hills rise in their dark, effective line, and, on the opposite side, Bredon Hill, with a tower upon its summit, always looks green and conspicuous.

Defford — whose name is derived from "Deep-ford," has a quaint little church, but otherwise, like Strensham, consists of scattered cottages and farm-houses, none of which are upon the river bank. After passing beneath the railway bridge, we steer the boat into the mouth of a small tributary — the Defford Brook — which comes in with many sluggish windings, through its green meadows. The banks of the brook are lined with willows, in the shade of which lie a flock of sheep, and its course is choked with luxuriant growths of water-weeds in the shallows, whilst its deep holes, about the edges of which the lily leaves lie, are suggestive habitats of hungry perch and pike.

As the boat lies in the mouth of Defford Brook the



The Haunt of the Reed-Warbler.

Eckington Bridge.

view in the distance up the river shows a low stone bridge and, straight over beyond this, Bredon Hill in yet another aspect, with its sloping green fields and woods, and the little tower on its summit. This neighbourhood is much affected by fishermen, and as we row towards the bridge we see several men fishing upon the bank and, passing rather too near to one who is watching with hope and anxiety the slight movement of his float under the influence of a nibble, we hear him mumble into his beard a sarcastic opinion of the necessity of widening the river to give the fisherman a chance.

It is Eckington Bridge to which the boat is drawing near, which is one of the oldest bridges on the Avon. It is of simple style, built of brown stone, with arches so narrow that the widest of them is only just wide enough to admit of the passage of the little steamers and barges which ply up and down the river. The bridge, however, has a solid, lasting appearance, as if good to bear all across the water who may pass along the main road between Bredon and Pershore for some centuries yet. Upon one side of the river, near the bridge, there are thick growths of river grasses, reeds and nettles. A little bird is singing there with great spirit as he moves from reed-stalk to reed-stalk, evidently very happy with his lot in life, though varying his song with a sort of scold, like a voluble housewife talking to her servants. We get a good view of him with a pair of field-glasses, sitting aslant and tightly clutching the reed that bends beneath his weight, and can see his brown back and breast of ashen grey and the movement of his little throat as he pours forth his

chant. He is a reed-warbler and a migrant who has only recently come back to his old nesting haunt, having, since last autumn, made a journey into the centre of Africa and back again, thus putting to shame the greatest of African travellers of the human species. Upon another day the bridge and the bird suggested this little poem :

AT THE HAUNT OF THE REED-WARBLER

Where the Avon is crossed by an old bridge of stone,
 By whose worn piers and arches the bright waters roll,
 I waited Love's coming and stood all alone,
 Whilst a dark flood of sorrow swept over my soul:
 "What avails life," I cried, "since we live but to die?—
 Fallen leaves on the stream, which the swift current speeds
 To a heedless destruction." The only reply
 Was a warbler's sweet twitter low down in the reeds.

I knew it of old time — the reed-warbler's strain,
 And I said, "Over land and the ruthless sea's face,
 Borne on little weak wings, he has come back again
 From far Africa's clime to his old nesting place.—
 What wonderful flight!" And a low voice replied:
 "So to her native sphere back at last the soul speeds."
 Then I looked in Love's eyes, and drew her to my side,
 Whilst the warbler's sweet twitter was heard in the reeds.

As we pass under the old bridge we see that the stone of the angular piers is much worn by the friction of the water acting through many years. The moralist, doubtless, could draw a lesson from that, but we pass on without further moralising. The beautiful old bridge being left behind, we row along the edge of another wide meadow, at the further side of which some houses amongst the trees betoken the settlement, in early English times, of the family of Bir, for the place is



Eckington Bridge.

Eckington, Worcestershire.

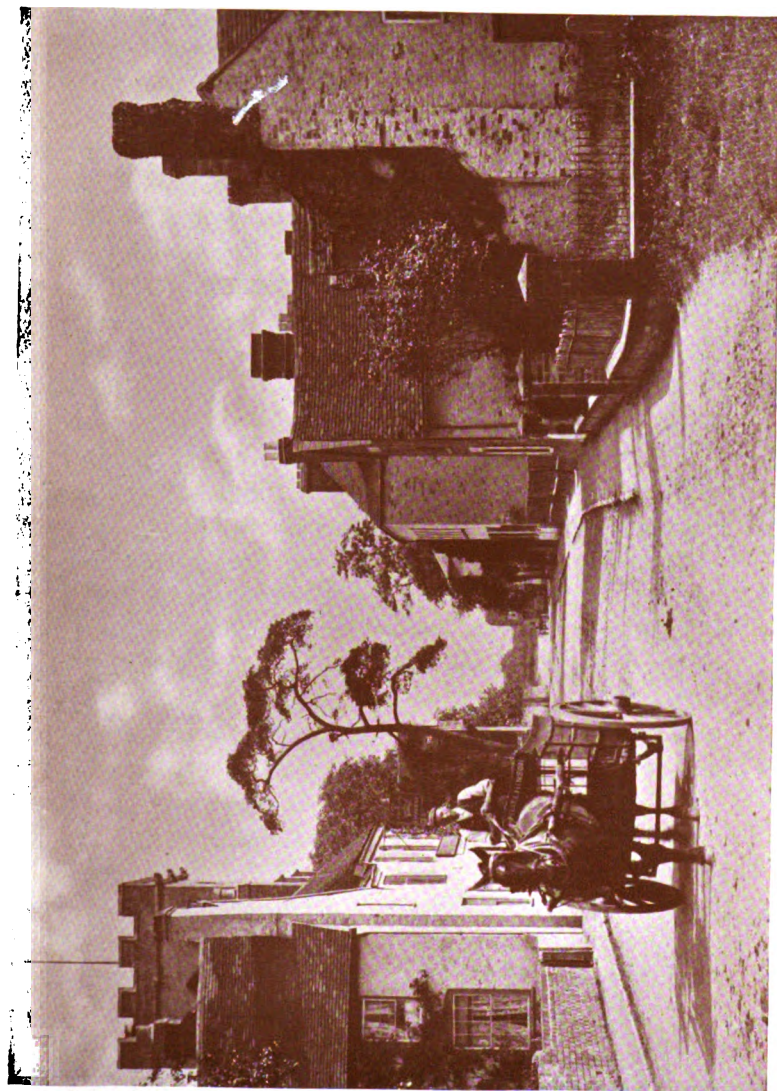
Birlingham. This village lies a mile or so away from the river. It has a pretty church with a turret springing from one corner of its tower in an unusual way and surrounded by very fine trees of numerous species; but we are not going to Birlingham this evening, but to Eckington, which also lies a short distance off the river, and we must first row to Nafford Mill, where we leave our boat in safety during our stay at Eckington. Proceeding onward towards this harbour, we pass a couple of exceedingly sharp curves in the river, trying to the steering powers of our coxswain. They are so sudden that the course of the river is lost to sight behind the willows and seems to have come to an abrupt end. The place is known as the Swan's Neck, from a supposed resemblance of the river-bends to the graceful curves in the neck of a swan. Past this the river again straightens itself in a reach to Nafford Mill.

There is a mile to walk from Nafford Mill to The Crown Inn at Eckington — a pleasant mile, by a road that rises and dips with the land that surges about Bredon Hill. We purpose staying for a time at Eckington and so have taken rooms at "The Crown," which is but a village public-house, but can provide chamber accommodation and simple fare for two or three people who do not need to live sumptuously. The butcher lives next door on one side of the inn, and only the church intervenes between it and the baker's on the other side, so that you are pretty sure of bread and meat. "The Crown" has a private parlour, not a great many feet square, but with walls covered with a paper of cheerful blue pattern, and a sunny window looking to the street. The inn has its public apart-

ments too: there is the kitchen with its stone floor, settles round the walls, and plain tables, upon which many a pint mug of blue earthenware has rested, growing less and less full as the result of being constantly carried from table to mouth, until the white bottom has become all too apparent to Joe Carter, Will Ploughman, or Dick Shepherd. It has also a large, old-fashioned fire-place with hobs on either side, which suggests comfort of winter evenings when the beer is, perhaps, sometimes warmed by being placed in a tapering tin jack which is thrust down amongst the live coals. No doubt "The Crown" kitchen, the pint mugs, the brown ale they contain, and the accompanying pipes, have their legitimate use, and are perfectly correct when not abused. If that same Will Ploughman goes home staggering, after having spent like a prodigal of his weekly pay, that is abuse, which henceforth must cease, honest Will, as people are not permitted to get drunk in these days. You take all the solid nourishment you require for supper in your own house, and if, after that, you ever seek the company of your fellows at "The Crown" to talk good sensible politics, you may drink the king's health in one cup of mild ale, and you are a fool if you take a second, my lad.

There used to be a drink called "small" sold in the public-houses at a half-penny a pint. Think of the quantity of that you could get for sixpence! But the beer is all sent from the town brewery now, and it does not pay to sell "small"; but remember, William, the milder your ale the longer your life.

Besides the kitchen of "The Crown," there is the



The Milk Cart.

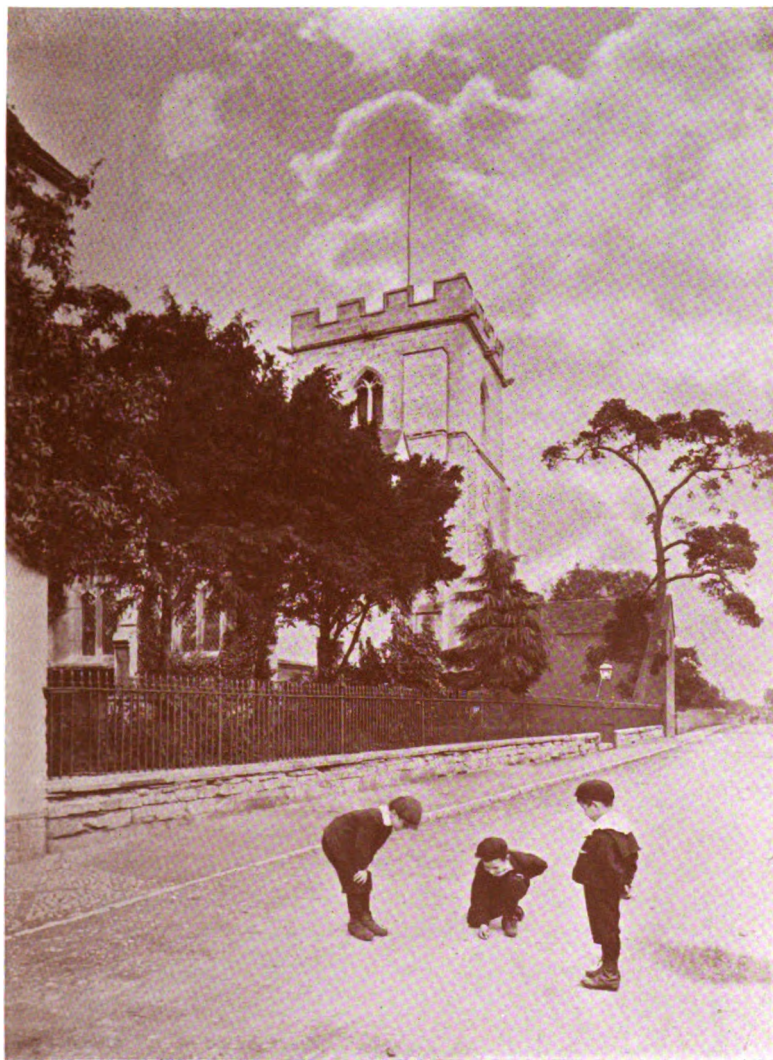
Eckington.

bar parlour, for the use of the quality, as it is supposed, but the company in the kitchen is of better worth than the company in the bar, as a rule; the latter have not half the "class" of the kitchen men. In an annex approached from "The Crown" yard is also the "Club-room" for private or party use, whose walls have seen unfolded the mysteries of the Never-mention-it Brotherhood at the occult meetings there holden, besides the great scenes of feasting and gaiety in which the natives, or visitors, have taken part from time to time.

Whilst in occupation of our quarters at "The Crown," we have plenty of time to explore Eckington and its neighbourhood. There are several pleasant walks and excursions to be made: we visit the old bridge again, by the road this time, and go up to Defford Church and back by way of Birlingham. Another day we take a walk to Bredon's Norton, and we often go down to Nafford where our boat lies, and once we make an excursion over Bredon Hill, as presently to be described. The village of Eckington itself has several pretty lanes on one side or the other of its main street, which is Church Street. Some of these lanes, along which are a few secluded farms and cottages, also go by the appellation of streets. The houses in these streets are generally ancient; some of them have been much patched-up and, apparently, at last, one has had to be entirely replaced by a new building. At the top of the town — every village seems to require to be called a town when you speak of the top of it — there is a stone cross, where the main road intersects the lane. This cross was restored in the year of the second Jubilee of Her late Majesty, Queen Victoria, and bears the

inscription of "God save the Queen" in Latin and English. Hammock Lane, which runs from the cross past the Lower-End Farm into the riverside meadows, is found to be pleasant of an evening, as its direction is towards the setting sun, and down there a good view of the Malvern Hills is to be obtained. There are several interesting objects that way — the little establishment of the wheelwright, with its saw-pit, for instance; and Purlwell Corner, and Boon Street with its old houses and, lower down by the farm, the turn leading to the red-brick manor-house. It is not suggested that there is anything extraordinary about the saw-pit, or other things mentioned. Purlwell Corner has no connection with any great event in English History. You have heard of the purling brook and the idea is here the same; the water overflowed the well with a trifling murmur, or purr; but you do not even see the well now, but only a common pump that has been put up over it, and Purlwell consequently no longer purls.

In Church Street we meet the butcher's son coming out of his yard with a quick stride, and a halter swinging in his hand. The halter tells us where he is going. It is to fetch the old mare from afield, and the guess is proved to be right when, presently we see him bringing her back. The baker's cart is a familiar object to us. Whilst the lad delivers to the house its daily bread in a basket, the horse dozes, never moving a foot forward even in his dreams, until, at the return of his juvenile driver, his fitful repose is broken by a jerk of the reins. The young man goes down past "The Crown" from the farm to deliver a churn of milk at the station; we know he will be back in a few minutes, and determine to fix



After the Shower.

Eckington.

him returning with his milk-cart for evermore, and to that end set the camera up in readiness. Now the railway porter comes wheeling up a truck with a box and leather portmanteau upon it; a resident of importance has returned home, or a stranger has come upon a visit. By the same train come several men with fishing-rods and we observe them dividing at the level crossing near the Station and choosing their respective ways to the river. One goes down Mill Lane, and one down Hammock Lane, and two up the Pershore Road towards the old bridge. There is not much companionship among fishermen; the business is too engrossing and the strain of expectation too tremendous. There comes a little summer shower which may, perhaps, make the fish bite, and, when that is passed, the boys opposite "The Crown" resume their game of marbles. It is the same old game of bull-ring, which has been played for many generations, if not from the time of the Pharaohs. This game is everywhere the accompaniment of advancing civilization; the black boys now play it in Bulowayo, and deem it one of the best inventions introduced by the English into Africa. And this is how life goes in Eckington, with nothing to disturb the quietness excepting the rush of the express train which, from time to time, rattles up and down the railway at a speed that hardly gives the passengers time to realize the existence of Eckington — a few small houses amongst plum and apple trees, with surrounding meads and cornfields, and a green hill beyond — that is all they know of it.

There is the church to be taken notice of, with its old square Norman tower and portal. One of those artistic

Scotch firs grows in front of the tower, its branches bending over the street. The effect of that solitary tree upon the appearance of the street is remarkable; it takes the eye immediately and gives a character to the village. Inside the church, the centre aisle and chancel are found to be paved with grave-stones, and there is a fine sculptured monument with two figures kneeling and facing each other. The inscription runs:—

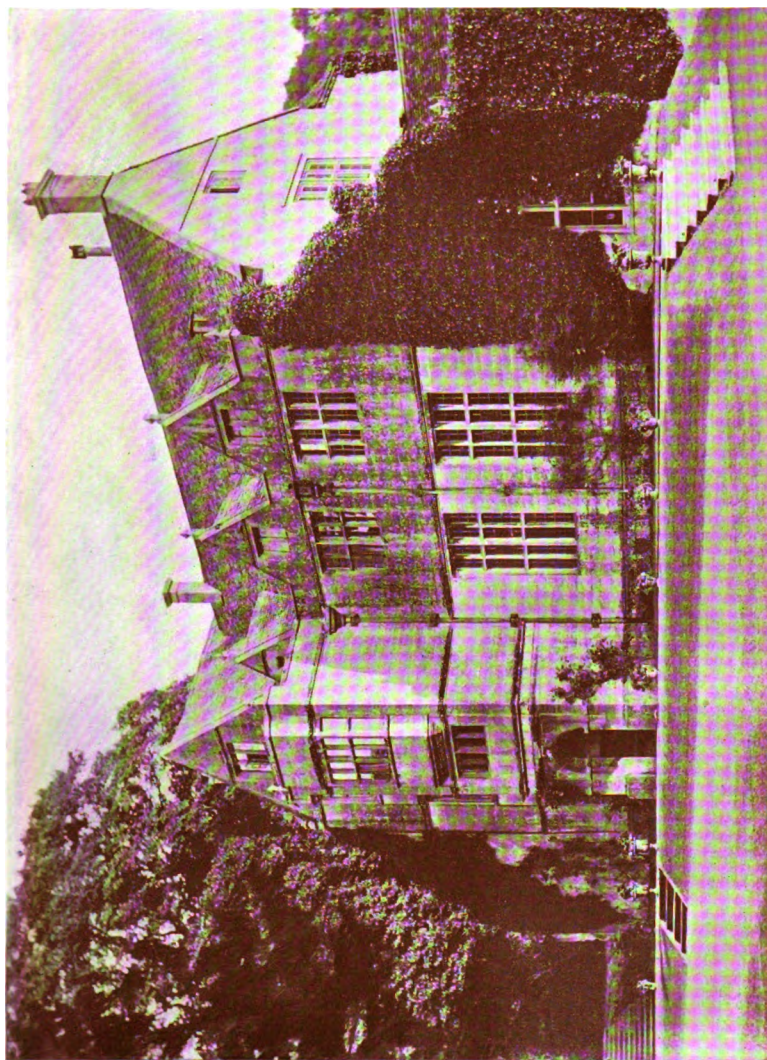
"Here lyeth the body of John Hanford of Wollas Hall Esquier and Anne his wife by whom he had issue 3 sons and 7 daughters, who departed this life the 17 day of August 1616 Aged 51. The sayde Anne his wife in love and memory of her husband hath erected this monument."

Below the chief figures, the figure of every member of the family, each kneeling upon a square cushion with tassels, is carved in relief, and there is a considerable heraldic display, the arms of the Hanfords and those of the wife's family being carved over and about the tomb.

"John Hanford of Wollas Hall Esquier" thus died in the same year as Shakespeare, and within a year or so of the same age. A representative of the Hanford family still holds Wollas Hall near by, and thus it appears that the Hanfords of Wollas Hall have outlasted their old friends and enemies, the Russells of Strensham.

IN THE KITCHEN OF "THE CROWN"

Now my friends we all are free,
But to freedom there's a border;
For all liberty must be
Subjected to law and order;



Wollas Hall.

Bredon Hill, Worcestershire.

"To uphold the constitution
 And put lawless licence down"
 Is to-night's first resolution
 In the kitchen of "The Crown."
 Shall the resolution pass?
 Every man of you must say;
 Hold aloft your cup or glass,
 So to signify your "aye."
 Thus your loyalty denoting,
 Next a toast to back your voting,
 Drink "The King, and the Symbol of the Crown."

There's a duty for us all
 Of whatever rank or station,
 In the life that's national,
 To support the state and nation;
 Then "To guard on land and ocean
 The flag we call our own"
 Must be the second motion
 In the kitchen of "The Crown."
 Raise on high your cup or glass,
 In a loyal sort of way;
 Let the resolution pass
 Nem. con.—without a nay;
 For in this we should not bicker,
 And whilst still you have some liquor,
 Drink "The King, and the Symbol of the Crown."

There are men who would have rules
 Not for them but for all others;
 Men who throw aside their tools
 And then shout "We all are brothers!"
 But for these and like offenders,
 We will lay this motto down:
 "Man is worth just what he renders"
 In the kitchen of "The Crown."
 Raise with me your glass or cup,
 In a loyal sort of way;
 Pass the vote, then standing up
 Give a "Hip-hip-hip-hooray!"
 And for those who think it fooling
 To cry down good law and ruling,
 Here's "The King, and the Symbol of the Crown!"

CHAPTER V

BREDON HILL AND NAFFORD MILL

BREDON HILL requires frequent mention in connection with the lower part of the Avon, because for five-and-twenty miles of the river's course the hill is in sight, forming an object more or less distant, in a great variety of landscapes. Through all these miles the country might be termed the land of Bredon and Avon, so intimately associated is the hill with the river. The hill is lone and unattached to other high ground, outlying the range of the Cotswold Hills, and forming an island, as it were, in the vale. Towards that side which looks away from the river it presents a broad back and slopes which, even to the summit, are not too steep for ploughing, whilst towards the Avon the ascent is more abrupt, and the steep, broken ground and clinging woods of its upper part sweep down to rich greensward lands and cultivated fields and end in the river-side meads. Round the base of Bredon Hill from Eckington the circumference would measure a dozen miles, and there are almost as many villages as miles situated upon the lanes that run about the hill, and a parish church and a parish council in each of them; for the villages maintain a strict independence one of the other — Bredon of Kemerton, Overbury of Beckford, Ashton-under-Hill of Elmley Castle, Elmley being round the corner of the hill from

Ashton, and out of sight is out of mind — and Little Comberton of Great Comberton and, in connection with these last two, a paradox is discovered when you find the little is larger than the great.

We set out from Eckington, one fine day, to explore the hill and some of the villages that skirt it. We find Comberton Lane full of sweet scents: there is a blossoming bean-field on one side of the road and a field overgrown with yellow charlock on the other side. Both bean and charlock blossom have a delicate odour.

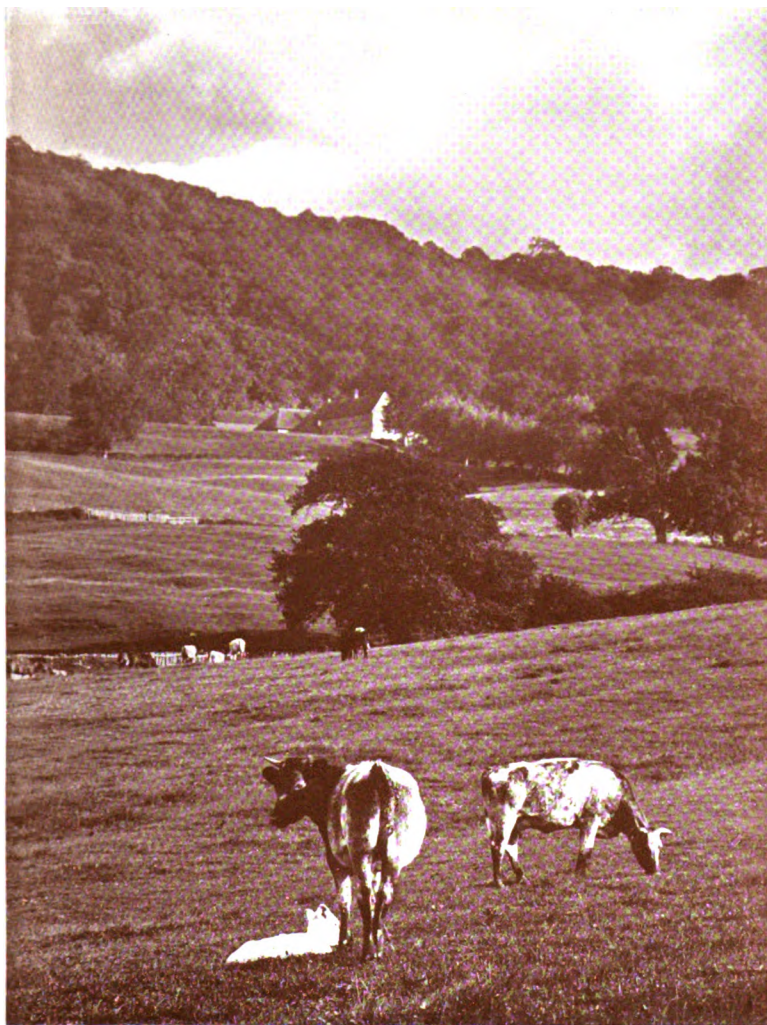
A group of children are met gathering wild flowers, which grow in great profusion in the lane: they reply shyly to our questions, and say that they have a half-holiday from school. Over the gate of a grass-field are seen some cart-horses that have been turned out there and, in the full enjoyment of liberty and plenty, have grown sleek and handsome. We go through the gate and the horses allow us to approach near and stroke their faces; but when we take hold of one of them by the mane the animal resents this liberty and, snatching himself free irresistibly, turns away to the more profitable interest of grazing the green bank.

Near another gate that leads into a newly-ploughed field, the plough is seen lying in the furrow where it has been left whilst the ploughman has gone to assist in the haymaking. We go through this gate too, and close up to the plough to examine it. It is one of the most ancient of human inventions; man has always required food and requires it as much now as ever; it is the first necessity, and the plough is figured upon those oldest of stone engravings, which the ancient Egyptians made in the tombs at Sakkarah. The

occupation that supplies a first necessity should be one of a leading order, but can we say as much as that for the labour of the simple person who drives a plough? Well, in one sense, yes! for man is absolutely dependent upon food for all he does, including that mental work which, requiring exceptional powers for its performance, is held at a higher relative value than those comparatively simple tasks such as ploughing, which most men can perform. To undertake the harder mental work is to voluntarily submit to very tiring trouble akin to physical pain, whilst ploughing is a happier occupation. Take hold of the handles of the plough and imagine yourself a ploughman, calling to your horses to pull-up, with a "whoa!" and a "gee-again!" to "Bonny" and "Derby" and "Darling." The plough-boy slams his whip, and the smoking team strains willingly at the traces, and the brown clay is turned over in even width, up to the top headland, where you turn round with a "whaw-whoop" and come down on the other side. Then think of the halt at mid-day for the simple dinner under the hedge, sauced with good appetite and digested with ease, the ungearing and return to the farm-yard in the afternoon, the attending to the faithful, friendly horses, and the tramping homeward to cottage and family in the evening light. The ploughman's life has much to recommend it, as compared with many a more complicated existence.

THE SONG OF THE PLOUGHMAN

Now up, lad! be steady,
And have the team ready
To start in the first light of morn;



The Dairy Farm.
Great Comberton, Worcestershire.

For it needs to be willing
For ploughing and drilling,
Would you see the field waving with corn.
Then crack your whip, Johnny;
Gee again, Darby! Bonny!
Heat, Darling! For stiff is the clay;
And the coulter we'll burrow,
To turn up a furrow,
And there will be a harvest some day.

Where our ploughshare is driven
The wild waste is riven,
And the brown earth is laid fresh and bare;
And where rude weeds have flourished,
Blade and ear shall be nourished,
As reward for our culture and care.
Gently up the hill, Johnny;
Speak to Darby; lead Bonny,
And leave Darling to go her own way;
And the good seed will follow,
On hill and in hollow,
And there will be a harvest some day.

When we cry halt for lunching,
Let the horses be munching,
With ourselves, their spent strength to restore;
And we'll keep a sharp hearing
For the time for un gearing:
Hark! It's Comberton clock striking four.
Then hold them up, Johnny—
Whoa! Darby, Darling, Bonny—
Unhook traces, and let us away;
For an acre is showing
We've done a day's ploughing,
And there will be a harvest some day.

Every man to his calling,
And the lot to him falling—
To earn bread by the sweat of his brow;
And to us it is given,
Out under God's heaven,
Here to labour at driving the plough.

The Idyllic Avon

Then tend the team, Johnny—
Darby, Darling and Bonny;
Give them water and corn and good hay;
Leave the plough in the furrow
And we'll come back to-morrow,
And there will be a harvest some day.

Up a turning to the right, out of Comberton Lane, we go to find that old country gentleman's seat called Wollas Hall, a house of very ancient foundation, but rebuilt in part in the reign of James I. In the civil war of the time of Charles I. the owner was a good Royalist, and the house was a useful place of retreat and hiding, being remotely situated and well out of sight, close under the steeper part of Bredon Hill. It contains a collection of portraits, including one of Charles I., and a very fine one of Queen Henrietta Maria in a yellow silk dress, with others of gentlemen implicated in "Gunpowder Plot." The portraits of Sir George Wynter, and of Henrietta Maria are by Vandyck, and that of Lady Wynter is attributed to Lely. The main front apartment or hall of the house is entered by a majestic doorway, and is lighted by fine old Jacobean windows. Over the wide fire-hearth the arms of the Hanfords are carved, being distinguished by a many-rayed star as the chief device. The hall has a lining of oak, and a music gallery at one end in the same dark wood, and is rendered even more ornate by the numerous portraits and family relics, which cover its walls. At the top of the house is a chapel with confessional provided for use at a time when the heat of the Reformation, burning at its fiercest, caused many a good Catholic to have resort to secrecy in order to carry on his accustomed



The Farrier's Shop

Elmley Castle, Worcestershire.

religious observances without interference. Under the house runs a considerable spring of water, and this at one time was used to turn a spit in a neighbouring kitchen.

Past Wollas Hall we climb to the top of Bredon Hill itself, and obtain the magnificent view afforded by this height. Behind the roofless tower upon its summit, that forms a landmark by which Bredon Hill may be recognised from so many places, and from so far, a fine air blows over an expanse of grass, tempering the heat of the summer sun. Below, and reaching for an immense distance up and down the country, the great valley of the river Severn extends; northward past Worcester, far into Shropshire, to where the round-topped Wrekin and other of the Salopian hills can be seen. In the opposite direction, down past Gloucester and Berkeley, to where broad, gleaming stretches of water proclaim the widening estuary and the approach to ocean.

More immediately below, and to the right, is the other river, the Avon, which, where not hidden by a verdant covering, can be traced to a sufficient extent to indicate the direction from which it comes out of the country eastward, that lies open to view for a distance in the direction of woody Warwickshire that is farther than eye can reach. The course of the Avon can also be traced by the little red towns of Pershore and Evesham, and the villages we have passed in coming up from Tewkesbury. The hills that bound the river valleys, ranging up and down the land, so beautiful in their contours, lie also in view: the sinuous line of the Malverns and the dark, tree-clad hills of the

Forest-of-Dean, the pleasantly indented Cotswolds and the blue lines of the far-distant, high, wild moorlands of Wales. Hill and vale, cities, towns and villages, rivers, woods and fields, of the beautiful counties of the West Midlands and the Welsh Marches, complete the comprehensive panorama that is seen upon a clear day from the top of Bredon Hill.

Here we stay for an hour in enjoyment of the air and the charming outlook, sitting, for a part of the time, against a huge boulder of rock locally known as "The Bambury Stone." This stone, and the two companion stones, called the "King and Queen," situated on the hillside some distance away, have been here for a very long time, perhaps ever since the days of the Druids. In a document of the time of Edward I. is mentioned the fact of the greater stone being here, and even in comparatively modern times the stones have been used in connection with certain rites and customs. On the hill-top is also to be seen the deep trenches of an ancient British fortress, which carries back the mind to the time when the Romans obtained supremacy in our island — more, perhaps, by their superior information than their better valour.

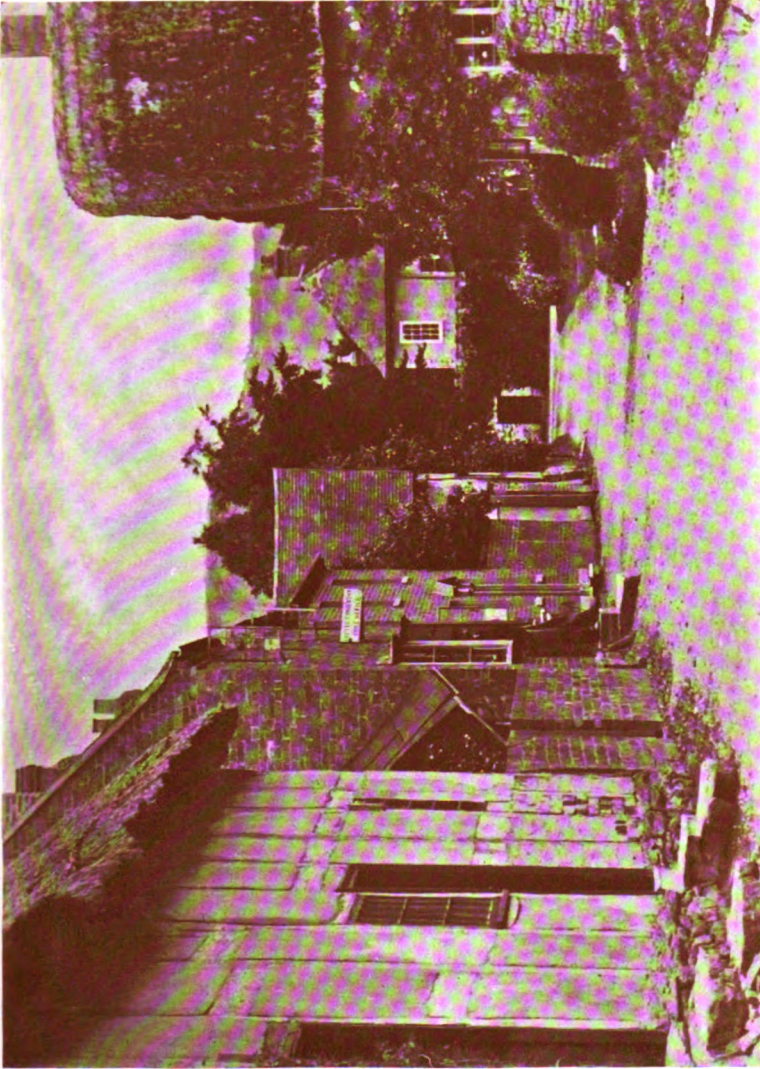
Following a cart-track, we find a road which takes us down the further side of the hill through a finely wooded park to the village of Overbury, and thence we go to Beckford, and so round the base of the hill through several other villages before mentioned. These delightful villages of Bredon Hill give us much interest and opportunity for conversation; the old houses vying in this respect with the inhabitants. Perhaps, of them all, the village of Elmley Castle is

the most pleasing. There is an extremely quaint air about this old village, and here we stay for rest and refreshment at The Queen's Head Inn, whose swinging sign bears the effigy of Queen Elizabeth, being, as it is said, a real ancient portrait of her highness. Beneath, the figures "1558-1603" are inscribed, being the period of her reign. On the reverse side of this curious sign-board is painted the pageant of the royal visit to the village. The Queen is mounted, in gorgeous apparel, on a white horse, and the inhabitants are gazing in dutiful, if rather stiff-necked, admiration at their sovereign. Some of these figures also are supposed to be portraits of the members of the family occupying the Manor of Elmley at the time, and the exact date of the Queen's visit, according to the legend upon the sign-board, was August 20, 1575. Possibly the Inn existed before that time, and bore the title of "King's Head" in the time of Harry the Eighth, as queens' heads went at a discount in his reign. However, with monarchs as with men at large, there are good and bad, and even presidents of republics are not all perfection. Good Queen Bess had her faults; in fact some go so far as to say that in character she featured her father. No doubt, however, she held herself royally upon her visit to Elmley Castle, and nobody there thought that posterity in looking back to those times would adjudge Queen Elizabeth a nonentity as compared with some men of her time, and particularly with that poet and actor whom she occasionally summoned to court to amuse her with his latest play.

Besides the Inn there are other old houses to be

seen in Elmley, including a fine old mansion; also the Church and the sundial in the churchyard, and the cross at the bottom of the street down which we go, past the farrier's shop, when we turn back towards Eckington through Little and Great Comberton. The Church contains a large monument with figures of members of the family of Savage, once resident here, their feet resting against carved lions. The castle of Elmley Castle has long since disappeared. Some of the stones of it, they say, went to build or repair Pershore Bridge.

There is generally something in the nature of at least one street in each of these villages, if by "street" we may mean a road with houses at intervals on either side, though an aggregation of five houses on one side and three on the other, would suggest a more crowded population than usual. Some of the villages are dignified by containing a great house, like Elmley, or even more than one great house and an Inn to boot; but not every one is so endowed. The villages are all backed, at a longer or shorter distance, by one side or another of Bredon Hill, and the various turnings and crossings in the lanes lead to places written up on the arms of the finger-posts, which are of great use to the stranger and which point variously to Hinton-on-the-Green and Evesham, to Bricklehampton and Cropthorne, and several to Pershore and other places. Out of Comberton Lane a road runs down to Nafford Mill, and we may take that way to our boat on our return from Bredon Hill. The Mill and its adjoining buildings are situated in one of the most verdant spots upon the Avon, but to call it a verdant spot does not



The Village Street.

Little Comberton, Worcestershire.

express the depth and variety of its greenery. The old grey stone mill, with its big black water-wheel, forms the centre of the scene and is closely neighboured by the open-fronted cart-hovel and the orchard on a slope, through which a path leads to the dwelling. The river is divided into several streams — one to drive the mill, another to fill the lock, and another which receives a tributary brook from the Birlingham side. This necessitates a multiplication of little bridges for the use of passengers on foot or horseback, as there is a bridle way over the river here. Between the waters are several small islands, edged with dark rushes and pale reeds, and covered with a luxuriant growth of osiers, nettles, docks, and burdocks; these, in their turn, being overgrown with bindweed and woody-nightshade, stray stalks of which catch at your ankles when you push your way into their domain, brushing the creamy pollen from the meadowsweet as you go, and bruising the strong-smelling ground-ivy and horsemint which spring up in thick patches closer to the moist ground. Willows overshadow the waters, which are often rippled with rising fish, and some large elms in the near neighbourhood add to the coolness of the place. Thick thorn hedges, with more trees, closely border the small meadows that lie up and down the river near Nafford. In these meadows the grass grows long and lush, and Bredon Hill, with its grazing-farms and woods, begins to rise from the river's edge, and on that side forms a near and effective background. However hot the summer day, Nafford always seems cool, for the sense refuses to associate heat with such intense viridity; but there is a

profusion of shade which in reality is always cool and pleasant to sit down in, but especially so when a mid-summer breeze plays with the trees, making a sound like the flowing of water in the willow boughs.

At Nafford it is not all pleasure and sitting down, for the miller is a busy man, with his mill and his waggons and team, and the mill-wheel is kept turning until well into the evening. Not infrequently a little steamboat passes through the lock gates, or even upon occasion, a string of barges. A few pleasure boats are usually moored in the neighbourhood of the mill, and a white tent or two may be seen upon the bank somewhere about here, proclaiming that the members of a boating party have pitched their camp for a period at Nafford. The master of the mill makes no objection to people taking their pleasure here, and does not refuse permission to camp upon his ground, and has given assistance and information to many who have come here for a holiday, and who are therefore under a great obligation to him. About the Mill you may lounge, leaning over the rails of the bridges, or on the black arm of the lock-gate, in contemplation of the surrounding scenery, and have your artistic feelings awakened by the sight of the mill, the fine greys of whose walls and roof make such a good contrast with the foliage around. A water-mill is always an interesting object. This turning of a wheel by falling or flowing water is such an old invention, almost as old, in fact, as the wheel itself, for water must have quickly suggested itself to the primitive mind, as an easy means of turning a wheel, and like other simple things a water-mill has a great artistic value, being so



Under the Evening Cloud.

Nafford, Worcestershire.

strong in its simplicity and so closely attached to nature.

At the gate which leads down to Nafford Mill through a short field there is a good view of the Avon with the Mill, the lock, and the neighbouring fields. It is a charming scene, particularly of an evening, when the sun, as he passes through the horizon clouds, shines full upon it for a few last minutes before his sinking ends the day. His light strikes the trees and buildings at a low angle, gleaming upon the roof of the mill, whitening the willow boughs on their sunny side, and making shadows long and deep beyond, which will soon increase into the darkness of night. The evening clouds overhead are already darkening, and the river landscape lies very still and beautiful under the last benediction of the sun, for the parting light sits upon it like the kiss of Peace.

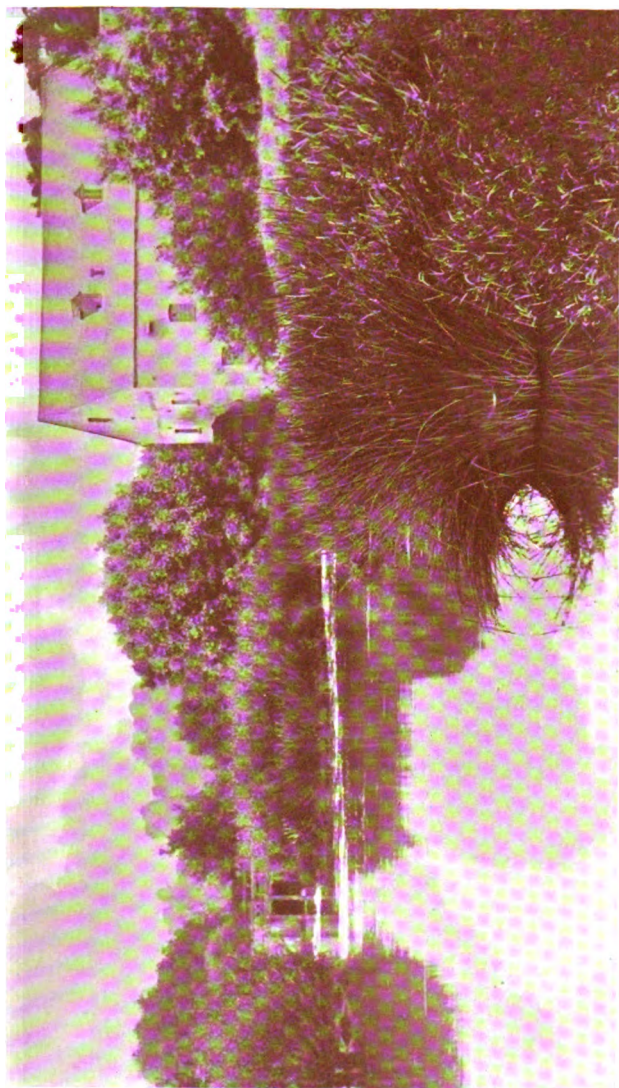
THE COUNTRY HOME OF AN ENGLISH SQUIRE

There's an ancient stone hall in a green midland shire,
The family house of a good English Squire;
With its walls built so thick, and its doors made so stout,
When you are not within you are surely without;
For the old hall was built in the long, long ago,
To give roof to a friend and to keep out a foe.
There's a taste of old time in the air you respire,
In the country home of an English Squire.

Great trees stand about it to break the rude storm;
The wainscot inside makes it cosy and warm;
Its garden flowers blossom in border and bed,
And its lawn is as velvet beneath the foot-tread.
There's a view of the vale the tree-branches between,
And a vista that ends in the hillside so green.
A fine place to possess, and a dream to desire
Is the country home of an English Squire.

In the hall there are relics of squires that are gone,
The good sword of Sir Robert, the ring of Sir John;
And the family arms that have never known stain,
With the arms of allies shine in panel or pane;
And each ancestor Squire, in his place on the wall,
From his portrait looks down, as if challenging all
Of the doughty deeds done in his time to inquire,
In the country home of an English Squire.

The good Squire in his home lives a life without blame,
With the lady who loves him, his dear, stately dame;
And in rural pursuits he delights, and 'tis thence
He derives his good health and his strong common sense;
And these virtues will pass from the sire to his son
With the ancient stone hall, when the Squire's life is done.
So may grand old gentility never expire
In the country home of an English Squire.



Nafford Mill.

Nafford.

CHAPTER VI

TO PERSHORE TOWN

WE take our departure one fine morning from Eckington and come again to Nafford Mill to find our boat and continue our voyage up the Avon. Nafford is a place one may easily grow attached to, and the green picture it presents is firmly impressed upon our minds so that we do not soon forget it when we have left it behind. If you pitch a camp there you will get your eggs and milk from the mill-house and make the acquaintance of the miller and his family. Being very near to Bredon Hill it is a centre for walking excursions, even as Eckington, whilst those who are tainted with a trace of nomadic blood will prefer to dwell in a tent rather than in a house. What could be more romantic than living in a tent by a mill on the Avon? It is well to have had a previous consultation and understanding with the clerk of the weather, however, as even the mollifying circumstance of being companions in distress hardly compensates for continued rain when you are camping out. Else there is something fascinating in it: you live quite the normal primeval life, having no thought whatever excepting for what you shall eat, though in regard to cooking and making of beds you are thrown upon your own resources. This, for a brief time, is delightful enough, even if a longer experience of it might tire. By the tidy or untidy way a

tent is kept you may learn much of the character of the occupant. Pails or bowls of dirty water standing about for you to run against; china left precariously standing on empty biscuit-boxes with which you must collide; a portmanteau spread out open in order to take up the maximum amount of space in limited quarters, and its contents strewn all over the ground, — all such things bespeak the person who is intended by providence to be waited upon, and not to undertake the management of a tent. Such a person is probably one of those unpractical, poetic people, given to talking stuff that will not bear logical analysis, and, whilst you are busy frying the fish for breakfast, possibly some you have caught in the river before he was up in the morning, more likely the homely herring, or “two-eyed steak” as the costermonger calls it, imported from Yarmouth or elsewhere — whilst you are cooking this fish, he is lying on his back smoking a pipe, or chaunting a ditty about a hill and a mill and a maid.

SWEET BETTY, THE MAID OF THE MILL

Bredon's woods are bedecked with their first tender green,
For the spring-time is lingering still,
And the apple boughs hide with a pink and white screen
The mill-house on the slope of the hill;
And the meadows are gay
With bright flowers to-day,
And the merry birds sing with a will;
But the prettiest thing
On this morning of spring,
Is sweet Betty, the Maid of the Mill.

Avon shines in its meadows of emerald grass,
Or the willows its waters conceal;

It reflects Nafford Mill like a mirror of glass,
 And is threshed to white foam by its wheel;
 There is beauty, I know,
 In the valley below;
 There is beauty upon the green hill;
 But the prettiest thing
 On this morning of spring
 Is sweet Betty, the Maid of the Mill.

Nafford Mill, with its wheel, and the trees that stand near,
 And the rushes that grow in the stream,
 To the painter a picture will ever appear,
 To the poet supply a good theme;
 Yet the painter will feel
 Betty's beauty appeal
 More than beauty of river and hill;
 And the poet will sing,
 Whilst his heart is at spring,
 Of sweet Betty, the Maid of the Mill.

We have made the acquaintance of a camping-out party at Nafford, and notice these things concerning them as we bid them adieu, leaving one of them frying fish and the other lying on his back waiting to be fed.

As we row away from Nafford Mill the warblers are all singing in the osier bed, two or three species chattering one against the other, and a kingfisher flies past us low down near the water, his brilliant plumage making a flash of blue colour that stays but an instant in the vision and is gone. A little way further on, in the neighbourhood of Great Comberton, and near the river-side house, Birlingham Court, the Avon turns in its course, and the reach of the river from here is directly away from Bredon Hill, so that a good view of the hill is obtained looking back. The morning growing warm, we stop for a time with our boat pulled up under the pendant branches of a willow, where it is shady and

cool, until the striking of a distant church clock advises us of midday. We move on again then, but, toward Pershore, we notice the farmer's people as busy as possible in a meadow making and carrying the hay. All the operations are in progress simultaneously, for, down the more distant side of the large field the mowing machine is rapidly laying the grass in swaths and, in another part, women in great sunbonnets with fork or rake are proceeding with the after operations, whilst further again in the other direction the men are loading up and carrying the hay to the new rick in the corner of the field. There is a man lifting children to the top of the load with a pitchfork for a ride to the rick. The child who has that experience never forgets the sensation of delightful fear engendered first by the long, sharp prongs of the steel fork under his arms, and afterwards by the chance of tumbling off, which causes him to lie down so close in the middle of the hay, as directed by the pitcher who, somewhat hazardously, has put him up to this height with the fork. When he gets to the rick he jumps off on to that, quite harmlessly, if it be not yet built so high as the full waggon; and then rides back in the next empty one. That is what is going on here to-day. The whole family, including the nurse and baby, come back in the empty waggon. Oh, the joy of it! Then they are all ready to lend their services in the haymaking; the girl of three years thinks she is doing a lot of work with a rake, and the boy of six would be offended with any proposition to the effect that his feeding of "Darling," the foremost, and "Darby," the filler, with handfuls of the new hay is not essential to the proper performance

of the work. And so the waggon and horses go up up between the windrows with cries of "Hold you!" to start them and warn the loader against falling off, and "Whoa!" to stop them after a few yards' advance. But, presently, a longer halt is made when all the workers group themselves together to take refreshment from a jar of beer. One holds it across his knee for facility of pouring into a drinking-horn. A full horn is passed to the lady of our party. It is a complimentary draught and, when tasting it, her expression of countenance betrays dislike; two of the haymakers in sunbonnets make an audible reference to "her," and the insult to the hospitality is hardly compensated by the effusive praise of the liquor given by the lady's masculine companion, when he has drained the horn to the last drop.

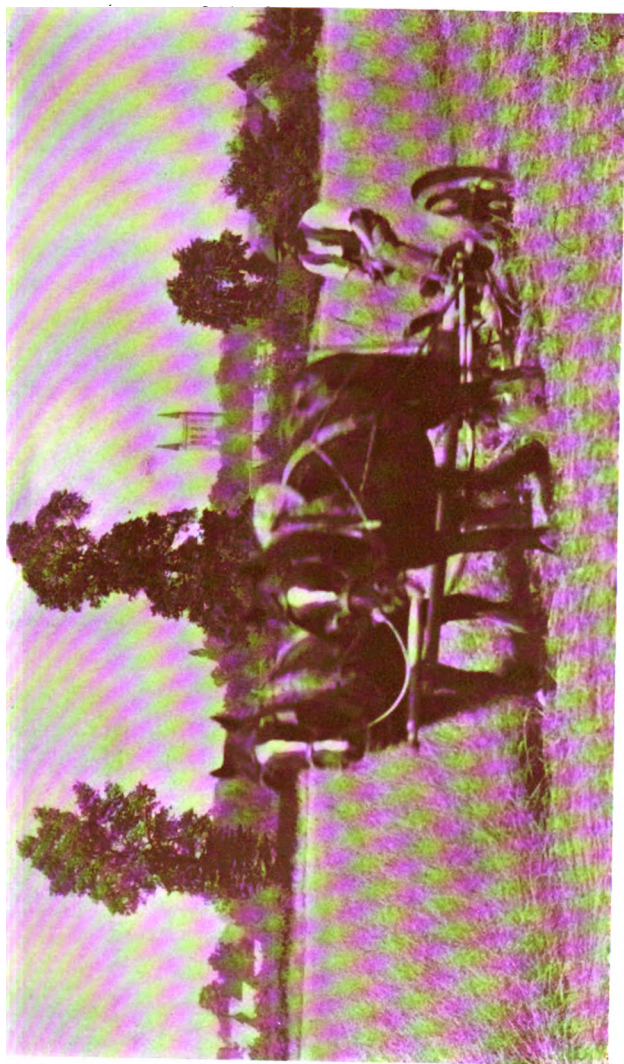
ERE THE MOWER PASSES

Love, the meadows to-day
With bright blossoms are full;
Let us hasten away
And a gay garland pull,
Ere the mower shall pass
Leaving change in his path,
And the flowers in the grass
Lie all dead in the swath.

For the joy the hours bring
Is for you and for me;
With the bird let us sing,
Honey sip with the bee,—
Seeking all that is good
To make life's little day
Bright as flowers when they stood,
And its end sweet as hay.

The river comes close up to the highroad, then turns away for Pershore Bridge, but before arriving there the boat has to be got over the incline at the sluices and water-gate that hold up a mile of water below Pershore lock. Above the fine old stone bridge is Pershore Mill; then the lock has to be passed through. Here there is a lookout over a dense growth of willows to the rising ground beyond, and it is from "pursh," ancient Saxon for "willow," that the town derives its name. Above the lock we soon make the landing place of The Angel Inn and walk up the orchard into Pershore Town. A town it is, for, in comparison with the villages which we have lately visited, its magnitude is exceeding great, its streets having long, unbroken lines of houses on both sides of the road. There is one such street in particular, the greater part of a mile long, opening on to a little square at about its middle, where, once upon a time, a market used to be held. Being held no longer the fact might be taken as a sign of decadence of the town from a state of higher importance, but the only thing in Pershore that speaks to the mind of a former magnificence departed is the remnant of the old abbey. This remnant stands, a truncated and pitiful testifier of the barbarity that led to the mutilation of the once perfect and beautiful building.

The history of Pershore begins with its abbey, which is stated to have been founded in the year A.D. 604. This statement, however, is more precise than authentic. It is safe to assert that there was a religious house here in the seventh century, or earlier, and in connection with it a resident brotherhood. Connected with the early history of the establishment are the names of



The Mowing Machine.

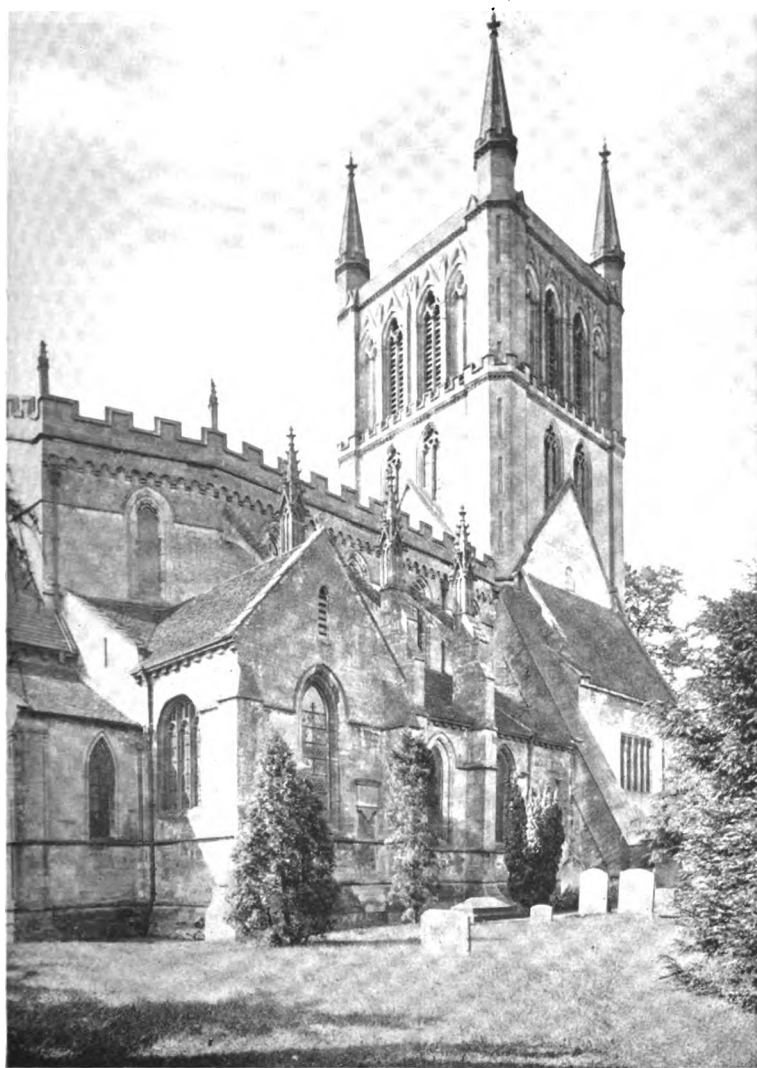
Pershire, Worcestershire.

Odda and Dodda, as in the case of Tewkesbury Abbey, though the spelling of these names varies a little and the date at which they lived is so variously stated as to be confusing. Thus one Odda is said to have been the son of a Saxon earl named Aelfer, Delfere, or Pelfer, who was surnamed "the most wicked," for he deliberately destroyed the great church of Persnore, and his son, Odda, is said to have taken a vow of celibacy lest he should chance to have a son who could do so evil a thing as his father had done. There is no doubt at all that there was an Odda of Saxon times, who interested himself in both Tewkesbury and Persnore abbeys and was buried at Persnore when he died. The abbey buildings were probably at first partly of wood, and they were destroyed on several occasions by fire, whether by accident or design. Odda probably rebuilt the abbey after one of those fires. The brotherhood consisted at first of secular canons, and it is said that one of the fires was caused by a wayward brother, who went out one night with a lantern, being infatuated, like any ordinary man, by the charms of a lady whom he had arranged to meet. He was only a secular canon and he carried a light, facts which might have been used by an advocate in his defence to prove that he did not pretend to be more than a weak human in the first place, and that he was not ashamed to hold a candle to his deeds in the second place. But the powers that be appear to have dealt with him summarily by causing him to set fire to the abbey.

Towards the end of the tenth century the secular canons were displaced by Benedictine monks, who dedicated the abbey to Saints Mary and Eadburga.

Eadburga was a daughter of King Edward the Elder, who, when an infant, showed her natural predilection for the religious life by preferring the Bible and eucharistic cup to ordinary worldly playthings, when both were placed before her. She was consequently placed in a convent. She died and was buried at Winchester, but later a portion of her bones were sent to Pershore, where they were long treasured as relics having a miraculous power of healing the sick. Such relics were commonly kept in abbeys and were the means of bringing pilgrims from afar, whose pious offerings added considerably to the revenue of the institution. Piety is a good quality and, so far as the pilgrims are concerned, their faith and guileless innocence are, in their way, admirable, though persons of unemotional natures will always harbour suspicions of dishonest imposition on the part of those who kept the relics and propagated the story of their virtues. With it all, the abbot here appears to have been short of money and to have applied for assistance to King Henry III. who granted him a patent to hold a public annual fair upon the feast of Saint Eadburga for such profit as it could be made to yield to the abbey. The privilege of holding this fair, along with other privileges granted to Pershore, were confirmed by succeeding monarchs. The fair, though altered to some extent in character and purpose, is still held in Pershore upon St. Eadburga's Day, June 26.

What remains of the abbey at the present time is the choir, the tower, and the south transept, with a fragment of the nave. The nave, the north transept, the chapels and the monastery buildings were destroyed



Remnant of the Abbey.

Pershore.

after the dissolution, and the choir, left for use as parish church, is now called the Church of Holy Cross, when not spoken of as "the Abbey." The choir has an apse of recent date in place of the Lady-chapel that once existed at its end, but otherwise is a fine example of Early English work. It was built by Abbot Gervaise, being finished in 1239 A. D. The design and ornamentation of the choir, and also of the tower, have suggested that the same architect who built Salisbury Cathedral was employed here to partly rebuild the original Norman abbey. The tower is a two-storied, hollow lantern, with a decorated interior. The remaining transept is very early Norman, or, possibly, part Saxon; perhaps its foundations were laid by Odda.

Some few hundred years after his burial the coffin of the great and good Saxon duke, the early patron of Persnore and probable rebuilder of its abbey, was dug up, and thus the tradition of his having been buried here was verified. The coffin was inscribed in Latin:

"Odda Dux quoniam priscis temporibus Edwinus vocatus in baptismo cultor Dei qui monachus effectus fuit ante mortem suam hic requiescit. Sit ei gaudium in pace cum Christo Dei."

Translated, this reads: "Duke Odda rests here because in former times he was called in baptism Edwin a worshipper of God who was made a monk before his death. May to him be joy in peace with Christ of God."

The ancient Saxon chronicle also tells of this same Odda, that he was "a good man and pure and very noble." Such an one is worthy to be remembered, and Persnore is honoured by the privilege of having

been chosen to provide a sepulchre for his bones. Before his death he had lived a saintly life at Deerhurst on the Severn, near Tewkesbury, which is one of the very few places where specimens of undoubted Saxon architecture are still to be seen.

Near the Abbey at Pershore there is a district inconsistently called "The Newlands," which is evidently a part of the older town that existed in the palmy days of the abbot and his freres, but Bridge Street, High Street and Broad Street, which at present constitute the main portion of Pershore, are built in red brick in the plain, tidy, utilitarian style of the Georges, the doorways all arched at the top, and containing a window for the hall in the arch, which is a sensible arrangement. The door itself is also an unmistakable feature: it is really a good front-door — solid, dignified, and when it shuts upon a person he is decidedly outside the house, in the street.

Pershore is just large enough to be a town, yet not so large as to get the mastery of the country. There are twittering martins at home under the eaves of the houses, and the swallows have their nests in the chimneys, and make their delightful music, thin and sweet as an old harpsichord, upon the house-tops, or the telegraph wires, or a dead branch in the orchard. It is a quiet, hum-drum, dead-alive place, where there is little to do, and yet you have never finished with it. There are two railway stations to serve the town, situated upon two different railroads; one of them is two miles off and the other three miles. The Three Tuns Hotel, at the Corner of Broad Street and Bridge Street, possesses an omnibus which goes to the stations



The Choir.

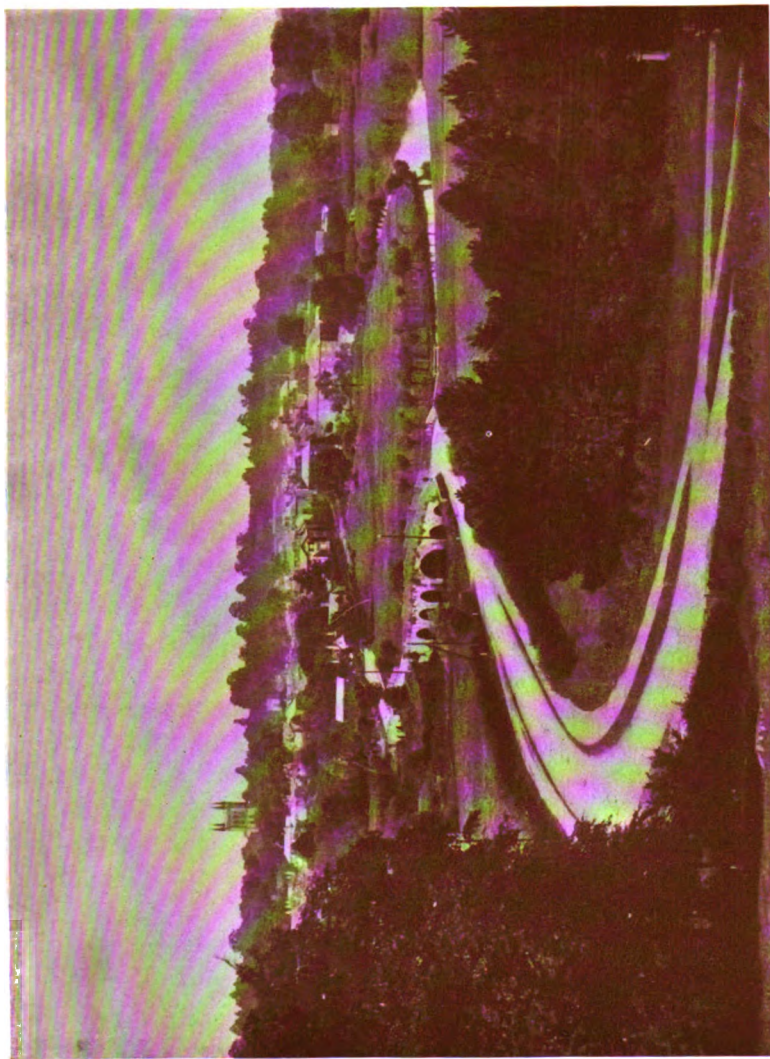
Pershore Abbey.

to meet the trains sometimes. The Abbey bells ring a chime at the hour, and every third hour, after the stroke of the hour, ring a tune — the air of one or another of fourteen old songs or hymns: they repeat the verse four times, so that some minutes of the next hour have elapsed before they cease. The ostler at the inn, or the man in the street, unconsciously whistles the tune of the day as he goes about his business. A short shady walk, called "Church Walk," leads under the spreading branches of horse-chestnut trees to the Abbey, and to another old church dedicated to St. Andrew, whose little, dim interior seems but a mild sort of competitor with the high, vaulted abbey choir, although it is of ancient date, having been founded in the reign of Edward the Confessor by the monks of Westminster who owned lands in Persnore and its neighbourhood.

There is a representative of most trades in Persnore, out of necessity, because it is ten miles to Worcester and seventeen to Cheltenham — both places being too far away to be relied on for domestic necessities. True, it is but seven miles to Evesham, but Persnore thinks itself as good and self-contained a town as Evesham, and would, perhaps, argue itself into being as large, if it were not liable to be met by a quotation of the results of the last census enumeration. It may very easily be imagined that this rivalry has existed between these two small towns at all times during the past thousand years, with an inclination on the part of Persnore to hold itself as good as Evesham, if not better, and a tendency on the part of Evesham to an annoying condescension in its notice of Persnore.

This whole neighbourhood is renowned for its fruit: at Pershore it used to be cherries that were chiefly grown, but now it is plums; which shows there is a fashion even in fruit. There are many plantations of plum-trees in and about the town, and the prosperity of the place greatly varies with a good or bad plum year. They say that if you meet a Pershore man in a good gardening season and ask him where he comes from, he replies, "Pershore: where d'you think?" But to the same question when the season is a bad one he grumbles out the reply, "Pershore; God help us!"

Pershore is, of course, very English — thoroughbred English of Worcestershire. It has its aristocrats, but they are few in number. That long street of Georgian houses, called in its upper half High Street and in its lower half Bridge Street, is the back-bone of the town. The people of Broad Street might perhaps like to be considered the head, but to place the head in the middle of the vertebral column in order to allow Broad Street such a distinction, would be to make the metaphor too obviously incongruous. It is quite unessential to separate the private residents, like John Jones, Esquire, and Mrs. Selina Smith, from persons holding offices of state, like the Master of the Workhouse, the Inspector of Police, or the Postmaster; nor need these again be distinguished from the members of the various little trades who have shops or work-shops. Any attempt to classify the Pershore population would be invidious, and useless too, because you would always have a remnant to be designated "the others," which would indefinitely indicate a large, if not a chief, class, including all persons of mysterious



Over the Bridge into Pershore Town.

Pershore.

and uncertain character, and those whose mode of living is a source of constant speculation and wonderment. In a place of the size of Persnore everybody is supposed to know everybody else, but such knowledge can, after all, be but partial, and the estimation one makes of another is probably in some cases mistaken, notwithstanding the great facilities afforded to everybody to discuss every other person's business. That is nothing, or nothing but what is very common-place; but what is something is the sunniness and simplicity of this little town, and the genial, friendly nature of its inhabitants.

The many little villages situated around look to Persnore as *the* town. There are Hill and Moor, Wyre, Pinvin, Defford, Birlingham, some of the Bredon Hill villages, and Wick, with several others only a little further off; and all these are to Persnore as children to their mother. At the bottom of Bridge Street is the bridge over the Avon. There is a meadow adjoining the bridge on the Persnore side, across which a footpath runs to the sluices and water-gate, and it is there the haymaking is proceeding, within sight of the houses of the town and the Abbey tower. Over the bridge there are other footpaths; one of them goes through a clapgate and up the steep grass slope towards the great house known as Avon Bank, and here a good general view of Persnore is obtained. From the foot of the bridge a lane runs away from the main road to the Combertons and Elmley Castle, which are within walking distance. Bredon Hill lies in that direction and, to the Persnore people, is a familiar and beautiful object that they have but to raise their eyes

to look upon. But the favourite walk is to the village of Wick, a short mile away, by the footpath which runs from the bridge-foot across the flat meadow towards the prominently placed mansion called "Wick House." The cottages are very old in this village, and the surroundings rustic as can be, but the villagers must always have lived within reach of the haunts of civilised humanity, as represented by the town yonder across the river. From here it is "over the bridge into Pershore Town," and the old grey bridge must have been a trysting place again and again for those who had their dwellings apart, in Pershore and Wick, until they came to live together in the town, or in the village, as the case might require. "How often, oh! how often, in the days that have gone by," have lovers approached that rendezvous with steps and pulses quickened by the pleasurable anticipation of meeting the beloved one, according to promise by letter or spoken word.

Country life grows upon you at Pershore the longer you stay and stray about in the neighbourhood. In quiet walks you may stop to gaze at a flock of sheep that has sought the shade of a great elm in the heat of the afternoon; or at the young cow stock that stand in the water, flicking away the flies with their swinging tails. Or you may study the growing crops — the wheat that has now come into ear, and the barley and oats that are shaking out spike and panicle to blossom and fertilise and fill with good grain; and the bright green leaves of the young mangolds, and the turnips that are wanting rain. The weather is bright and the country charming. It is the month of flowers. Can-

terbury bells and lilies and roses are in every garden, and the odour of syringa is wafted over the fence from the grounds of the great house. There are wild roses in the hedges, pink or white, and masses of white blossom upon the elder-bushes by the wayside, and the privet-bushes, which last fill the road with their too sweet, honey-like scent. In the hedge-top the white-throat sings his little song, and the notes of the bullfinch, greenfinch, and chiff-chaff are heard around. Down at Wick, and along the Evesham high-road, and on the Worcester road, and in all the lanes and fields is seen the promise of the year fulfilled, or within measure of fulfilment; for the young calves, lambs, and foals, and the youthful chirping birds, clover ricks thatched and hay ricks being made, and the corn and beans and crucifers coming on in hardy state, all speak aloud of a generous increase — of summer indeed, and of harvest to be.

Many persons come to Persnore for fishing — that gentle, contemplative, and lonely craft. The spirit of the fisherman is disturbed by company, movement, or noise. He swears — inwardly, at least — at everyone who comes near him, and would have them give him and his precious angle and float a wide berth. He fishes from before sunrise — which he considers a likely time — to the middle of the day, which is not such a good time, but he fishes straight on because evening is coming when the fish will be again more likely to bite. His persistence is wonderful, his patience exemplary; and how admirably he consoles himself when, at last, perhaps a little cold and stiff, he takes his rod to pieces, shoulders his probably

empty basket and goes home! His home may be in the locality or twenty miles distant, requiring the meeting of a train. When he gets there what stories he tells his wife of his luck or ill-luck, and what marvellous fairy-tales he relates to his friends of the fish he hooked and landed — or would have landed had his tackle held!

There is a fine deep piece of water between lock and lock at Pershore; access to this is immediately obtained from "The Angel" boat-house, and we are often afloat during our stay here, taking voyages leisurely and brief down to the mill, and up as far as the village of Wyre. Sometimes we also stop to fish, letting the boat lie amongst the flags at the bank. Returning homeward upon one occasion, with a very light catch, we discuss the weakness of all fishermen towards an exaggeration of their prowess with rod and line. It is easy, in conversation, for a small fish to grow into a monster, and for six to become sixty. Whether from some unexplained influence of the atmosphere of the river-side or otherwise, there is a tendency for the tongue of the fisherman to run away with him. On the present occasion, for instance, the pride of one of the party, who has succeeded in catching two little sprat-like roach is almost unbearable to those others who have caught nothing. We pass a man whom we have noticed fishing from the bank all day, and the lady of our party suggests, mischievously, that we ask him what he has caught.

"What luck?" is the question shouted to him in consequence.

"Oh! not very good. It is rather too windy; but I have got a bream three-pounds-and-a-half."

Now a bream of three-pounds-and-a-half is a very good fish for the Avon.

"Ah? That's a fine fish. Do you mind holding him up?"

"If you'll wait a minute; but I think I've just got a bite."

Perhaps he thinks we shall not wait, but we do and, when the drift of our boat — being constantly towards him — looks like spoiling his sport in the place he has chosen for fishing, he lays down his rod and, going to the basket, he holds up to view a fish which, instead of being three-pounds-and-a-half, is three-quarters-of-a-pound.

"Thank-you," says the lady. "What a beauty! Is that a bream?"

"Yes," says he; "that's a bream," and he puts it back into his basket with great care as we row away.

"I was once told," says the rower, "that when a person says an untrue thing it is not necessarily a lie; it may be a mistake. Do you suppose that was a lie or a mistake?"

"That," replies the lady, "was a bream."

THE TRYST AT THE BRIDGE

"Will you meet me to-night—
There's a moon—in her light
I will walk with you home;
Come, for you I will wait
At the bridge; come at eight—
Do not fail me, but come."

The Idyllic Avon

So I wrote, and I came
With my passion aflame,
Like the red sunset sky;
And have watched the sun set,
From the bridge parapet,
And the moon rise on high.

Hark, the chime, it is eight!
Will she come? She is late.
Quiet, heart, beat not so!
The game draws near the goal,
Tell me, oracle soul,
Will she come—yes or no?

She will come; she is near,
For her footfall I hear.
Beat in time and in tune
To her step, heart of mine—
Eyes, behold how divine
She appears 'neath the moon!

CHAPTER VII

MOONLIGHT AND MORNING AT PERSHORE

THE Avon is not the same at every hour of the day, but varies from the freshness of morning through the heats of the noon and afternoon to the coolness of the evening. But night is the most impressive time to be upon the river, for then Nature is left in undisturbed possession of the world, and this is the best time for any one or two persons, who may chance to be awake, to commune with her, and question her upon the great secrets she holds. We seek this experience at Pershore, by staying upon the water from sunset to sunrise.

At sunset the water, placid and calm, reflects the tinted clouds and doubles the glory of the Western sky, as well as the river-side trees and buildings, whose images lie to apparent great depths in the river. When the sun has disappeared there comes the afterglow and the gradually fading twilight, and the air becomes cool as the first stars begin to appear. Then distant objects grow dim and uncertain and there is a duski-ness beneath the trees and along under the river banks. The water-hen comes out and may be seen walking in the ooze at the edge of the water, or flying across the stream, and a short string of wild-duck, coming from no one knows where, descend from the high altitude at which they fly, and strike the water with their

breasts, making a splash that can be seen and heard from some distance away. The vole comes out of his hole and looks at you with bright, beady eyes, as he sits, nibbling, upon the fallen and decaying branch of an old willow; the bat, also, surprises you by the sudden dip he makes down in front of your face, then up again as suddenly and away, as if he had found himself out in a mistake.

Later the moon rises and sheds her soft radiance upon the nocturnal scene, showing in dim outline the trees and the distant hills, and in rather bolder relief the white tent that is pitched in the orchard at the edge of the river, down by the small quay and boat-house of The Angel Inn at Pershore. The reflection of the moon, when she presently rises sufficiently high, makes a stream of fairy light that shakes and shimmers with the least ripple of the water's surface, and sparkles amongst the small waves made by the dip of the sculls and the wash from the stern.

After proceeding a short distance up the river, we run the prow of the boat amongst the flags and reeds at the bank and lie still there listening to the harmonies of night.

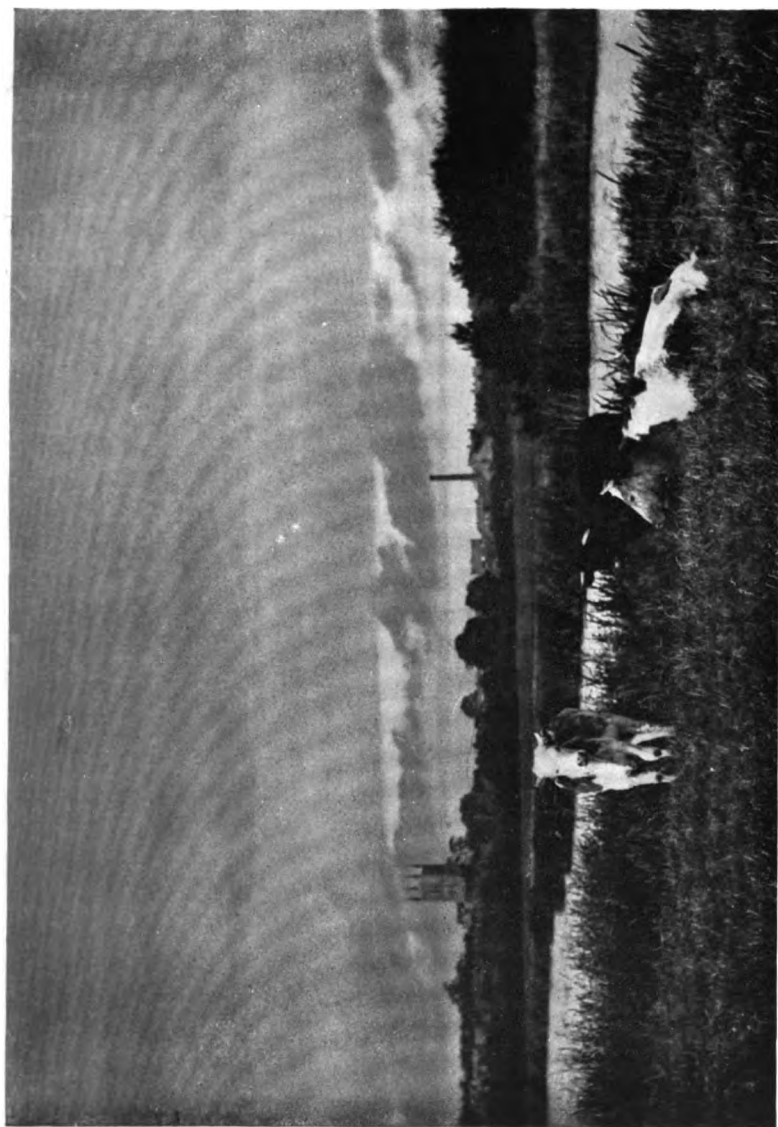
The sounds of the night upon the river are peculiar to it: the splash of the leaping fish; the croak of the water-fowl; the subdued roar of the water falling over the distant weir; the hum of the beetle on the wing; the loud breathing of the cattle sleeping by the river side, and the hush-hush of the breeze, which seems to have travelled from afar to whisper of tomorrow in the tops of the trees. A little way from the river on one side lies Pershore, and dimly the abbey

tower can be discerned in the moonlight. At first, from that direction, come sounds of human life which at this time seem to travel farther and be more distinctly heard than at noon; such as the shouting voice, the bark of the dog, the footstep of the trotting horse, and the roll of wheels. But gradually these die out and then a death-like silence reigns over the town, broken, however, at exact intervals by the abbey chime, by means of which we are made aware of how the night is passing: now it is midnight; and now one, and two, and three, o'clock.

Above and around is the vast universe with its worlds upon worlds set in immeasurable, unknowable, unthinkable infinity. There is the standing rebuff to the microscopic arrogance of men, who have just sufficient intelligence to be able to compare themselves with that. Men have divided the heavens into constellations. They have played with the stars, so far as they can see them: think of it! They have applied telescopes to bring within sight a fraction more of the illimitable, and have seen other stars by this means, and given a name to each new discovery. But what of the beyond? The moon goes serenely upon her way, gradually making her course across the heavens, but we know that her apparent slow movement is in reality very rapid and that she, and our earth too, are being whirled through space at a speed too awful to contemplate. How helpless we are, how small, how ignorant! Will the light of knowledge ever come to us? Can we ever become so far developed as to understand the meaning of the whole scene which here, as we lie upon the river to-night, we view in so uncom-

prehending and hopeless a way? Nature vouchsafes us no answer. Her great book lies open before our eyes, but we cannot read it, being unschooled in the use of so mighty an alphabet.

The midsummer night is brief and the sky is soon beginning to show a band of increasing light down at the horizon in the north-east, and we watch the dawn gradually lighting up the dark world, and bringing it back to day. It discovers the boat lying amongst the sharp-leaved flags under a briar-bush: the bush is covered with pink roses, leaves and blossoms all wet with dew. Gradually both near and distant objects become distinct, Bredon Hill looming up in its place and Pershore Abbey showing clearly with the pale, waning moon still shining above it. The cattle also, that have been heard in the night, are now apparent to the eyes, standing, or still lying, in the dew-saturated grass close to the river. By the upward radiation it is possible to divine where the sun is coming up, and we dip the oars and pull up towards Wyre Lock, until a stretch of river is reached which lies away towards the point of greatest light. As the boat turns the corner into this reach, a heron rises from the water side, and flies with slow-flapping, great wings towards the shining orb. For now the sun bursts through the low horizon clouds that are barred with golden light, sending his beams athwart the water, between the long, deep shadows of the trees. Up, higher and higher he goes, above the tree-tops into the misty azure, conqueror of the night and ruler of the day.



Dawn on the Avon.

Pershore.

THE COMING LIGHT

Now Morning in the shining Orient rears
Day's first bright signal, dear to watchers' eyes,
And Night, with dreadful shades and lurking fears,
Flies as the uneasy dream at waking flies.
The crescent moon grows wan and disappears;
Each dim, uncertain star fades from the skies,
As yon low cloud pierced through with silver spears,
Shows where the conquering sun in covert lies.

So shall the worn-out fallacies that vex
The souls of men, who for the morning wait,
And long for purity to come of pain,
Fly fast, and fade, and never more perplex,
Before the lifting of the eastern gate,
Where enters Truth that will forever reign.

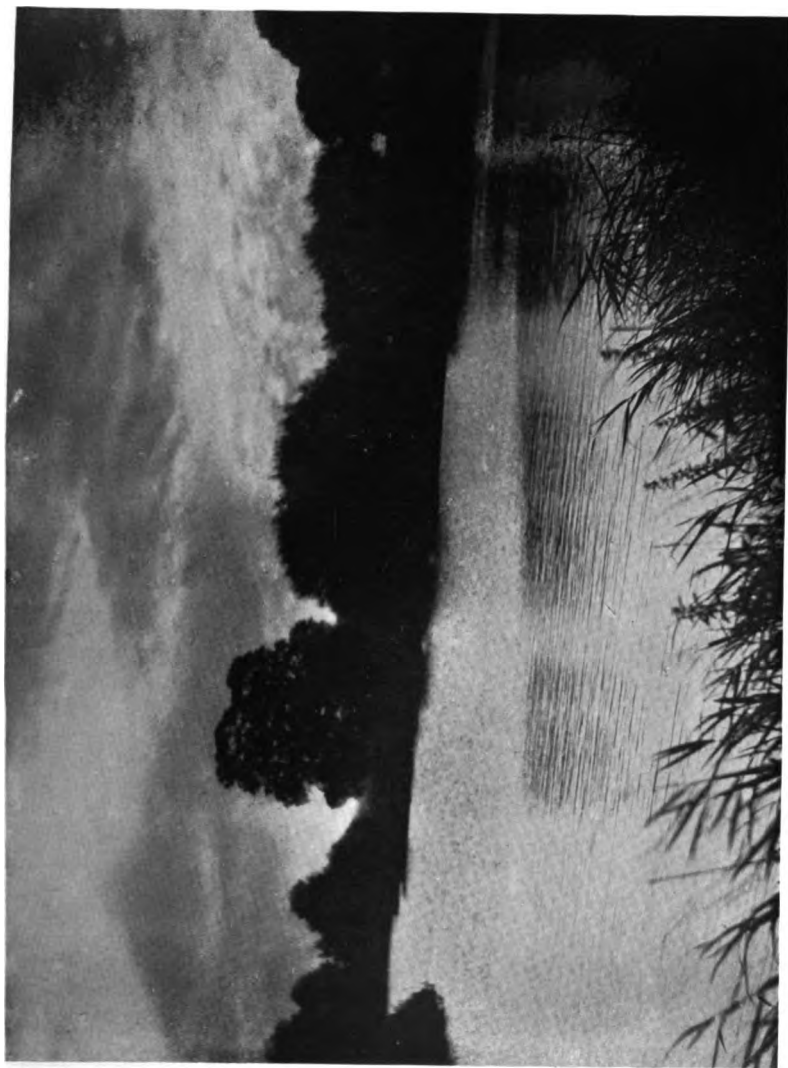
CHAPTER VIII

ON THE WAY TO FLADBURY

"PLEASANT Pershore" is the alliterative title we adopt to express our appreciation of the little Worcestershire town, when about to leave it. We go round it once again before departing. Passing the Abbey, we come by a footpath through a garden thickly planted with plum and gooseberry trees, into the Defford road, and to the beautiful burial-ground, which is full of well-grown deodars, cypresses, and other trees. Thence we get across a meadow to the river, and come back by the old bridge. Later we go down "The Angel" yard and through the orchard to the boat and, turning the prow up-stream, bid adieu to Pershore.

Up towards Wyre Mill the river is divided by several small islands and there is some uncertainty as to the proper passage. We get into a wrong channel which leads behind one of the islands into an *impasse* of rushes and lily-leaves. The lady takes advantage of the error of her steering to pluck some of the lilies, dipping her hands into the water to take hold of their long stalks. They are water-lilies of the yellow species, too stiff to be very beautiful, as if they were made of wax; but she admires them and thinks she even likes their odour, which is sweet but very peculiar and unlike anything else.

At Wyre lock, after the sluice gates have been



Sunrise on the Avon.

Near Pershore

turned up with the crank and ratchet provided for the purpose, and we are waiting for the lock to fill, some clouds begin to gather and the ominous sound of distant thunder is heard. A few drops begin to spatter the surface of the river, but our voyage is proceeded with, when we are through the lock, and the village of Wyre, where shelter might have been obtained until the skies cleared, is passed by. So when the weather begins to declare itself in a more emphatic way to be considerate rather of the young turnips than of the comfort of people in open boats, and as there is no place more exposed to the wetting effect of rain than the middle of a river, where the impression of the wetness is probably enhanced by the proximity of water on all sides, we begin to seek a mode of escape from the coming storm.

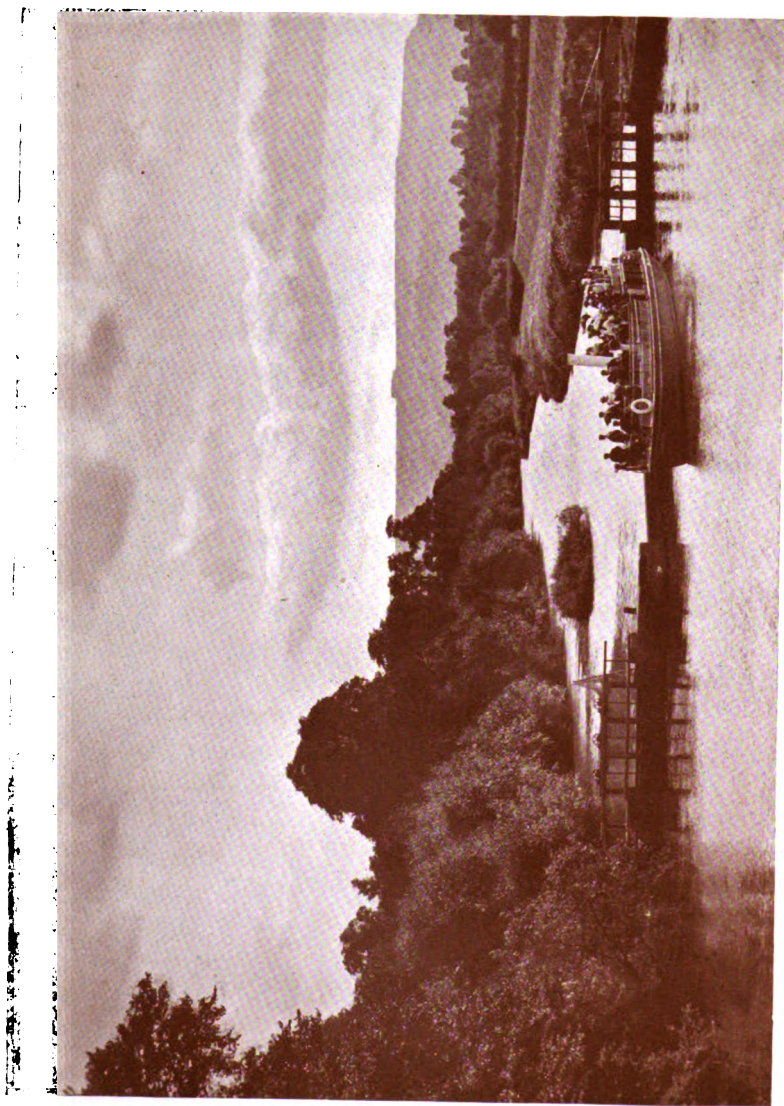
We find the needed refuge under a couple of old pollard willow trees, that have suffered many loppings in close and sympathetic companionship, and whose large and partly hollow trunks are bending over the water, topped with their latest growth of branches and foliage. One of these trees leaning conveniently over the water and away from the drift of the rain, interposes its sheltering trunk between the boat and the storm, and when the stern is pushed close up under the tree, we find fair shelter, for though the water drips through the leaves and runs like a flow of tears down the side of the trunk after it has been for some time raining, not a drop touches us and very little rain comes into the boat, whose painter being tied round a convenient branch, prevents her drifting.

In this place we stay whilst a heavy summer thunder-

storm bursts over us, accompanied by a torrent of rain. The clouds have gathered until the whole sky is thickly obscured. Vivid flashes of lightning leap from cloud to cloud, or make momentary crack-like streaks down the clouds earthward, and the thunder that had begun in an uncertain rumble, makes an awful clap and roar above our heads. The rain falls thick and fast, enclosing us from surrounding objects as with a cold, grey screen. It patters like lead upon the lily-leaves, and breaks and whitens the surface of the river with its myriad strokes and splashes.

When the storm is over the air feels very sweet and cool. Some swarms of gnats that, somewhere and somehow, must have been protected from the rain, are now hovering over the water near the banks and the swallows are dashing up and down the river, feeding on the gnats in all probability, though on account of the swiftness of their motion it is impossible to see them open and shut their wide, insect-catching gapes. The clouds part, rise higher and float through the atmosphere, trailing their shadows over the fields, and the wet foliage sparkles in the sunshine. The earth appears refreshed and the brightness all the more enjoyable after the period of cloud. Perhaps it is always so — with storms other than rain-storms — our pleasures needing a break to save them from monotony.

The banks in this part are thickly lined with reeds which have now grown tall and strong. Rising from the water along the margin of the river, they stand in deep, unserried ranks, rendering it difficult, or impossible, to get to the bank where they grow most thickly.



The Water Gate.

Crophorne, Worcestershire.

They bow their feathery heads and lift them again in elegant motion with the alternate strengthening and remission of the wind, and the rustle they make is a pleasant sound to hear.

Presently a spot is approached where the bank on one side rises steeply, and is thickly covered with trees. At the top of this hill, standing out prominently above the tree-tops, is seen the square tower of a church, which serves to discover the village of Cropthorne, the houses of which lie hidden away behind the trees on the hill. At the foot of the hill the river is barred by sluices and a water-gate, an arrangement which is locally known as a wyre. The gate stands open and the boat passes through into the swift, shallow water above, which will not admit of navigation by the steam-boats until the gate has been shut to allow the water to rise above it to a couple of feet or so of greater depth. It is, however, deep enough for a small rowing-boat to pass without shutting the gate, and when the gate is shut a small boat can pass, by being pulled up a slope made for the purpose, without opening the gate. There used to be a ford here, which was more or less dangerous and troublesome, and impossible of use after heavy rains, until at the Jubilee of Queen Victoria the local authorities signalised the happy event by supplying the thing that was deemed to be most useful to the locality, namely, a bridge. It is not a beautiful bridge and rather spoils than improves the landscape, but it serves its purpose and is a boon to the neighbourhood in comparison to the ford, and although it is not itself a thing of beauty, but rather of use, it can be made to accommodate itself to art, for from the

elevation of its roadway there is a view of the river with Bredon Hill in the background which makes a pretty picture, especially if a little steamer full of excursionists, voyaging up from Tewkesbury, should happen to have just arrived and be standing by the closed gate waiting for the water to rise.

Half a mile above the river-side hill, which is crowned by Cropthorne church tower, and on the other side of the river, is another village — Fladbury. It also has a square towered church, and some tall poplars that stand up proudly on the left of the village as you approach it. On the river at Fladbury there is a lock and a weir, two mills and a ferry. The mills are really both at Fladbury, but one of them is on the Cropthorne side of the river, and is Cropthorne mill, though the lock and bridge and weir, and most other things in the locality, are generally called after Fladbury, which is the more important place, as may be gathered from its having so many belongings.

EARLY MORNING CALL TO THE RIVER

Awake, Love ! I see the first signs of the morning
Far away on the edge of the slumbering world,
Where the widening promise of daylight gives warning
That night's sombre curtain is due to be furled.
You wished me to call you thus early last even,
To join me in greeting the incoming day,
So arise, for our boat
Is already afloat,
Where the river gleams under the brightening heaven,
And I wait here to row you away.

Only the birds have awakened before us ;
The song of the blackbird has hardly begun ;

The starlings, at tree-top, in sibilant chorus
Tune their pipes for a hymn to the new-risen sun;
The night-bequeathed dew's shine resplendent, and quiver
On brown bough and green blade and blossom new-blown:
Come, then, to our boat,
And together we'll float
Down the stream, you and I, and none else on the river,
And claim this summer morn for our own.

Over the hill-top the amorous sun creeping
Sees the river's calm face by his radiance kissed
To a fiery blush, then the meadow-land steeping
By the warmth of his gaze, in an odorous mist,
He summons the breeze of the morning, which blowing,
Disperses those vapours of tender dew's born;
Whilst we in our boat,
You and I, Love, afloat,
Feel the coolness of night in the clear river flowing
And inhale the sweet breath of the morn.

CHAPTER IX

FLADBURY AND CROPTHORNE

THERE are two small inns at Fladbury — "The Anchor" and "The Chequers." "The Anchor" is not prepared to accommodate with bedrooms so large a party as three persons on this occasion, and, whilst one remains at this emblem of hope, the other two find refuge and unchequered rest at the other public-house. "The Anchor" is a quaint old inn, low built, and not too commodious. It stands a little back from the road, fronting the highway, and is so prominent that anyone coming here is sure to be attracted by it. "The Chequers" is a newer house of much less romantic appearance, but of quite equal comfort. The rations available at both houses for casual travellers are of a simple sort. There is always that excellent stand-by, fried eggs and bacon; though, of course, a dependence has to be placed on hens for eggs. Bacon improves by keeping a year, but most people think eggs are too old at that age. There has been no limit laid down by law, however, as to the time during which eggs may be sold as "fresh," the legal position in this regard being lax, as might be supposed by those who have extensive experience in eggs. It is not, however, at Fladbury that any reason arises to find fault with the quality of the eggs. There seems to be a good supply of them, as well as of bacon. The one of our party

who sleeps at "The Anchor" comes down to "The Chequers" for his eggs and bacon. He is very laudatory of bacon as an article of diet when, upon the first evening at Fladbury, it is served for supper. He says that well-cured bacon is a most admirable store of concentrated, nutritious food. Together with bread and an egg it forms an almost perfect diet, that may be relied upon to keep the body heat and muscular force well maintained. When the same dish is served for breakfast, he further descants upon the edible uses of the pig; but when it is presented for dinner he smiles philosophically and says it reminds him of the gold-miner he once met, who had returned from the Klondike, looking as hard as iron after the first winter spent by the men who had rushed up there upon the discovery of the new Eldorado. "In the course of our conversation," says he, "I asked, 'How did you get on for commissariat — I understood a good lot of bacon was fortunately got up before the passage was blocked by snow?'"

"'Ah, yes,' he replied; 'capital stuff — bacon; keeps so well and is always something to go to. We went to it three times a day.'"

"'And how did that suit?'"

"'Oh-h! it was all right; we should, perhaps, have begun to think it monotonous if the winter had lasted another three months.'"

The landlady apologises for giving us bacon for the third time upon this occasion, but reminds us that we have come back from our morning's outing very late for dinner, and declares that another party has been in and eaten what else she had. This same party is

encountered outside the house and their appearance indicates a considerable capacity for clearing dishes. There are two young women and three men. One might be the *pater familias*: he is rotund, and of heavy weight. The two other men are hard, brawny-looking athletes, and the ladies are of the same breed and development — a very robust party. The men are in flannels and the ladies in summer frocks, one of which is of blue linen and the other is white, both looking very neat and smart.

A short lane leads off the high-road at Fladbury to the water side; at the top of this is the cottage where the people live who have charge of the ferry, and down the side of the lane, near the water, are some primitive out-houses, where a pony is sometimes stabled and leans his head out over the half-door. Down there a woman is often seen at work: one day she has her arms in a washtub, and on another day she is cleaning a basket of onions, in preparation for market; the rejected tops of the onions she throws down into the water of the river. There are two ferryboats there, both of the kind that is worked by a rope, or chain, stretched across the river at some height above the water. The one is for public use, but the other is a private convenience for the use of the occupants of Cropthorne Mill House, and its rope runs across towards the mill, the high, plain, red brick side of which stands up over there very conspicuously. Both the house and the mill are really upon an island, for the lock is on the further side of them. Fladbury Mill, the roof and gable of which can be seen a little lower down the river, is a larger mill that looks as if it had seen long



Fladbury Lock and Ferry.

Fladbury, Worcestershire.

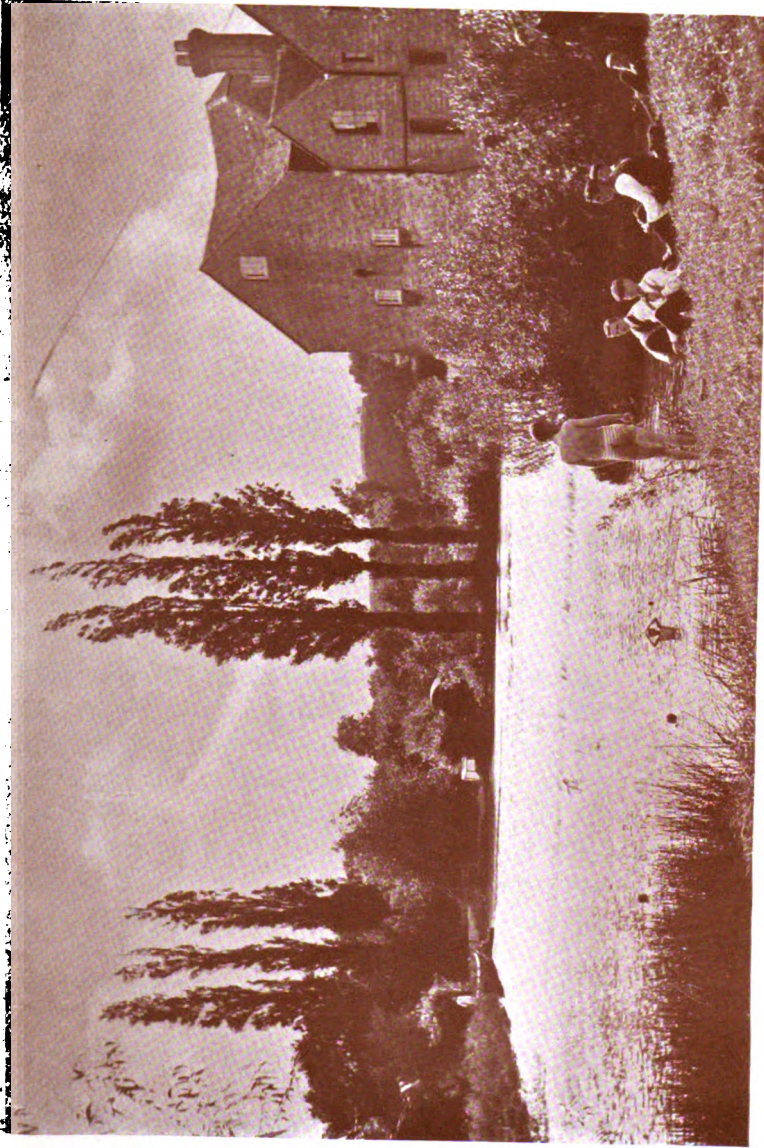
service, and its antique adjuncts are pleasing in their primitiveness. A fine weir slants down from near one mill towards the other. Above the mills, near the river bank, stands Fladbury Church, with its handsome tower and commodious interior, probably rebuilt with some of the stones of the great church that anciently stood here in the days when monasteries flourished. The rectory, situated near the church, has a beautiful terraced lawn coming down to the water-side, and glimpses of church and house are obtained between the foliage of graceful trees. Higher up the river than the church a thick wood borders the river on that side, and at the end of the wood the railway bridge, with its tubular piers, looks very well in its green setting. Rising beyond this bridge are the finely wooded green hills of Craycombe and Wood Norton.

Cropthorne Mill House is at the present time occupied by a family of holiday-makers. Two of their number are seen fishing from the weir, their bare feet and legs in the stream. Presently, when an accession to the party has been made by the advent of a friend upon a bicycle, who is duly ferried over to the house, girls and men don bathing costumes and disport themselves together in the deep water of the mill head, diving and swimming and seeming to be turned, for the time being, into new animals of an amphibious species. When they have had enough of these exercises they retire into the house to dry and dress themselves, and soon after the rattle of tea-things and the cheerful chat and laughter from within tell that they are enjoying themselves in another manner. This party has a couple of rowing-boats moored near at

hand for use at any time. When we make their acquaintance they tell us that they have spent a most pleasant fortnight at the mill, rowing, fishing, bicycling and walking about the neighbouring country.

Some of the prettiest of the Avon country is here, and within easy reach. There are pleasant and easy walks to Lower Moor, Throckmorton, Craycombe, Crophorne, and Charlton, and places further afield; and the river is nowhere more beautiful and attractive for boating. As the place has a railway station it is easily accessible and well known locally, for you quickly get to it from Evesham or Worcester, but you must bring your boat or order it to be sent from Evesham, as boats are not on hire at Fladbury.

Fladbury was anciently called "Fleodanbyrig," which means "the protected town of the flood-land," a name it deserved on account of the liability of the river to overflow here and flood the neighbouring meadows. Comparatively speaking, it was at one time of much greater importance than at present, for it is now only a village of moderate size. We read that King Ethelred gave the town to Ostforus, Bishop of Worcester, A. D. 631, but a religious house is said to have been founded here before that date. Ecgwin, the third Bishop of Worcester, changed Fladbury for Stratford-on-Avon, and here we have evidence of Stratford having been a place of equal importance with Fladbury at that remote period. The Bishop of Worcester, however, held Fladbury in the time of William the Conqueror, so that it must have come back to its original possessor in some manner or other. Domesday Book gives us this information:



In the Heat of the Summer Afternoon

Fladbury.

" The bishop holdeth Fledeberie, there are 40 hides that pay tax—
 " besides sixteen men servants and three maids, and a mill worth 10s.
 " and twenty sticks of eels, and fifty acres of meadow, a wood two
 " lewes long and half-a-one broad, of which the bishop hath all the
 " profit from hunting, honey and wood for the salt-pans at Wych,
 " and four shillings."

At one time there was a vineyard at Fladbury, as there also was at Tewkesbury, and many other places in these parts, and from this it is to be supposed that wine was at that time made in England from native grapes. Why the custom of growing grapes went out of fashion is uncertain; perhaps the wine of France was superior, but definite information upon this subject would be interesting. If grapes for wine could be grown in England in olden time, they could be grown still; but no living person appears to have known of a vineyard in England in actual being, though the name is met with not uncommonly as applied to a field or piece of land.

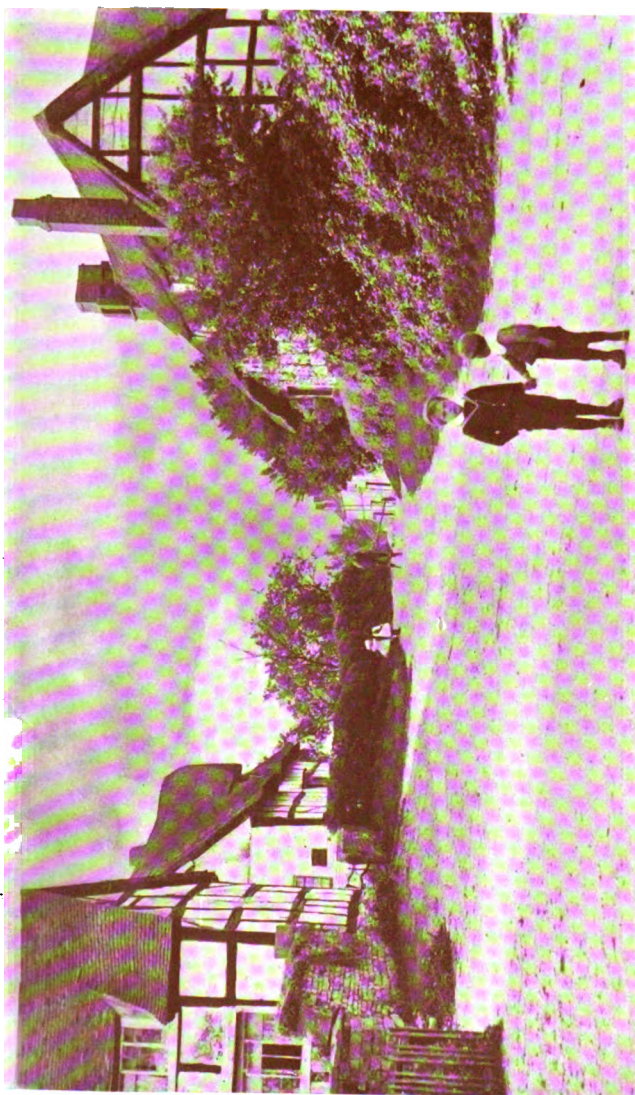
We walk to Cropthorne, a beautiful village with a number of pretty, half-wood houses, many of them most picturesquely placed. You go there from Fladbury over the Jubilee Bridge, and then up the hill in the direction of the church tower that has been seen from the river. The artistic eye is delighted with the cottage homes of Cropthorne. One scene presents a bit of street, in which stands the village post-office with its thatched roof and flowery front, and the dark ilex tree by the manor-house gate beyond; another, at the opposite end of the village, has a lovely old farm-house up on the bank at the left, another artistic house on the right, then a dip in the road, and Bredon Hill to end the further distance; whilst up the side

turning is a group of half-timbered houses of the oldest sort, presenting quite a check-work in black and white. Here is the chief grocer's shop; the approach to the door of it is up a flight of stone steps, both door and stairway being shaded by the thick foliage of an adjacent tree. In the bits of garden belonging to the cottages, stocks and marigolds, phlox and asters, sun-flowers and dahlias, hold their blossoms and buds sunward, for the sun shines brilliantly, as seems but fitting in so bright a little settlement.

In Cropthorne church are some interesting monuments to members of the Dingley family. One tomb, surmounted by the figures in stone of the persons to whom it relates, bears a long inscription, as here given:

" To the during memory of Francis Dingley Esq. nobly descended on both sides, deriving his masculine line from the ancient family of the Dingleys of Dingleyes of Lancashire, which was since more ennobled by many honorable and worthy matches as of Hunsaker deduced from the ancient kings of Scotland, Thr'gmort'n, Rowse of Ragley, Tracy, Hardwick, St. Nicholas, Nevell and Bigge. His feminine line fro' his mother Mary the daughter of Sr. Edward Nevell lineally descended from Joan de Acris daughter of King Edward ye first, fro Joan daughter of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster and son of King Edward 3, and Conistans daughter of Edmund Langley, Duke of York fift son of King Ed: the 3. Her mother was Elinor daughter of Lord Windesor. He happily matched with Elizabeth the daughter of Thomas Bigge Esq. descended by his mothers side of the noble families of Bruges, Salwey, Bracey alias Brace and Magdalen Hoby his wife, by whom he had issue eleven sons and eight daughters, and with whom having spent the space of fifty years in comfortable wedlock, he died in peace, leaving behind him the pretious memory of a zealous patriot, a worthy justiciar, a true friend of true religion, and a great example of valour and wisdom.

" Elizabeth his late consort hath consecrated this mean monument of her love and his merits, obit 27 Octb. A.D. 1624 Æt. 74."



In an Ancient Village.

Cropthorne.

The fecundity of Elizabeth was superlative, and at least fifteen members of her family are represented by as many figures carved round the sides of the tomb, each one in a devotional attitude kneeling upon a cushion. The gentleman and lady themselves lie on their backs in effigy, nicely dressed after the Elizabethan mode. They were contemporaries of Shakespeare, whose pedigree was somewhat obscure, and at this time the advantages they derived from their remote connections with the ancient kings of England and Scotland, and their relationship with Th'gmort'n, Rowse of Ragley, and the rest, is not so apparent to us as it must have been to themselves. The name of Dingley, notwithstanding this lady's prolific family of eleven sons, was destined soon to die out, and leave nothing behind but such remains as lie enclosed in the vaults in Cropthorne Church. The monument is a fine one, however, as monuments go, and near it is another equally fine, to Edward Dingley of the same line, the kneeling figures over the tomb being dressed in the fashion of the Stuart period. The inscription over this second tomb is in Latin and runs:—

"Edwardus Dingley arm. filius Henrici filii Francisci juxta sepultus, et Jocosa uxor ejus, filia Samuelis Sandys de Ombersley equitis aurati, de qua septem suscepit liberos, quatuor filios et tres filias. Vir publice privatimque bonus. Obit 4 Martii 1648. Æt. anno 46.

"Jocosa uxor superstes amoris et observantiæ hoc moerens posuit."

The name of Sandys is still well known at Ombersley. It was one of this name and a connection of this family who built the locks on the Avon to make it a navigable river up to Stratford, doing the work at his own cost

and presenting it to Parliament when finished. He lived at Fladbury, but, although he might justly have been described as "*Vir publice bonus*" no monument was raised to him. Perhaps he had exhausted his fortune in carrying out the engineering work, which was of considerable magnitude for those days, and so left nothing for the erection of expensive monuments.

The family of Dingley, or, as it is sometimes spelt, Dineley, lived at the hamlet of Charlton hard by. When the male line expired in the person of Sir Edward Dingley, the estates passed by marriage to the Goodyeres, who in their turn came to an abrupt and tragic end. There were two childless brothers, the elder of whom inherited the ancient holding of the Dingleys at Charlton; the other was captain of H. M. S. *Ruby*, and a fearful and unbrotherly feud raged between them, which ended in the captain having his brother seized, conveyed aboard his ship at Bristol and murdered there. The crime was discovered and Captain Goodyere was hanged. The family of Foote then inherited. This name was familiar at the end of the eighteenth century by reason of a famous comedian bearing it. He, in fact, was a younger brother of Foote of Charlton. The mansion in which the Dingleys and their successors lived at Charlton has disappeared and the property has passed through many hands in later times.

Crothorne, as well as Fladbury, was the property of the Bishop of Worcester from very ancient times, and when, in the reign of Henry VII., the Dingleys came to Charlton and patronised Crothorne Church, they acquired by purchase certain rights of the Bishop,



Edwardus Dingley, Arm. et Jocosa Uxor Ejus.
Crothorne.

including a lease for eighty years of the fishery between Fladbury Mill and Chadbury Mill, for the yearly rent of thirteen shillings, and of the warren at Fladbury for a rent of eleven shillings. Sporting rights evidently went at a comparatively low price then as compared with how they sell at the present time!

The fact of Fladbury and Crophorne having once belonged to Ecgwin, Bishop of Worcester (circa A. D. 700), brings to mind a tradition concerning him. He was a notable person and the greatest preacher of his age. He was, however, accused by certain malicious and jealous persons of immoral behaviour, and was straightway ordered to appear before the papal throne. The way was long and toilsome, but to show how easy it is for innocence to overcome difficulties, he determined to walk to Rome with his ankles shackled together, so that it was impossible to take other than very short steps, and only to take those with pain and infinite labour. The shackles having been locked upon his legs, the key, by his order, was thrown into the Avon. No doubt the news of his mode of travelling spread far and near, and it is likely that many thought he would never arrive in Rome. However, he arrived at the great city in a wonderfully short space of time and, upon the evening of his arrival, sent one of his companions to fish in the Tiber, intimating that a fish was waiting to be caught. Soon a fine fish was hauled to the bank and, upon cutting it open, lo! the key of the lock of the shackles upon Ecgwin's legs was exposed to view! The Pope was much impressed and instantly reinstated him in his bishopric.

TELL ME WHERE DWELLS HAPPINESS

Tell me where dwells Happiness—
In the palace or the cot?
Does she bide with kings, or bless
Most the peasant's humble lot?
Once I saw her standing by
Whilst I worked, and so I cried,
"Stay awhile by me, till I
Put this tedious task aside."

Now, thought I, has Fortune sent
All I wished this many a day:
"Welcome, Happ—" but Discontent
Had driven Happiness away!
Tell me, where dwells Happiness,
In the palace or the cot?
Does she bide with kings, or bless
Most the peasant's humble lot?

CHAPTER X

IN THE VALLEY OF EVESHAM

WHEN we leave Fladbury, after some stay there, our way up the river lies through the Valley of Evesham which, of a certainty, is one of the greenest and most beautiful valleys in the world. The term "Vale of Evesham" is applied somewhat indefinitely and is sometimes made to include a portion of the Severn Valley, which is more properly called "the Vale of Worcester." But the valley of the Avon in which Evesham lies, and particularly that part of it between Fladbury and Evesham, is the Valley of Evesham proper. On one side of it, not far from the river, runs a line of low hills by Craycombe and Wood Norton, beautifully tree-clad. They are the end hills of that broken hilly country extending from the Ridgway at the confines of Worcestershire and Warwickshire, down here by the villages of Bishampton, Inkberrow, and the Lenches. The Worcester high-road lies between the river and these hills — road and river being separated by a line of meadows which are replaced towards Evesham by extensive plantations of fruit-trees. The ground rises on the other side of the river towards Bredon Hill and the effect of a valley between hills is very decided, though it is not a mountain valley and its beauty is of the quiet kind. Looking along the vale some miles over beyond the town

of Evesham, other higher hills are seen; namely, the Cotswolds, in the neighbourhood of Broadway. They lie eastward and to the south-east and might be called the hills of the morning sun as viewed from this Valley of Beauty and Dear Delight—the Valley of Evesham. Perhaps it is in May that the valley is at its best, when the buttercups and lady's-smocks are abloom amongst the luscious grass which grows so thick and green and cool in these meadows; but in later summer, also, many flowers blossom by the water-side, and in October, when the days are sometimes very clear and the woods are many-hued, the prospect from the high-road, or from the hills above, is glorious.

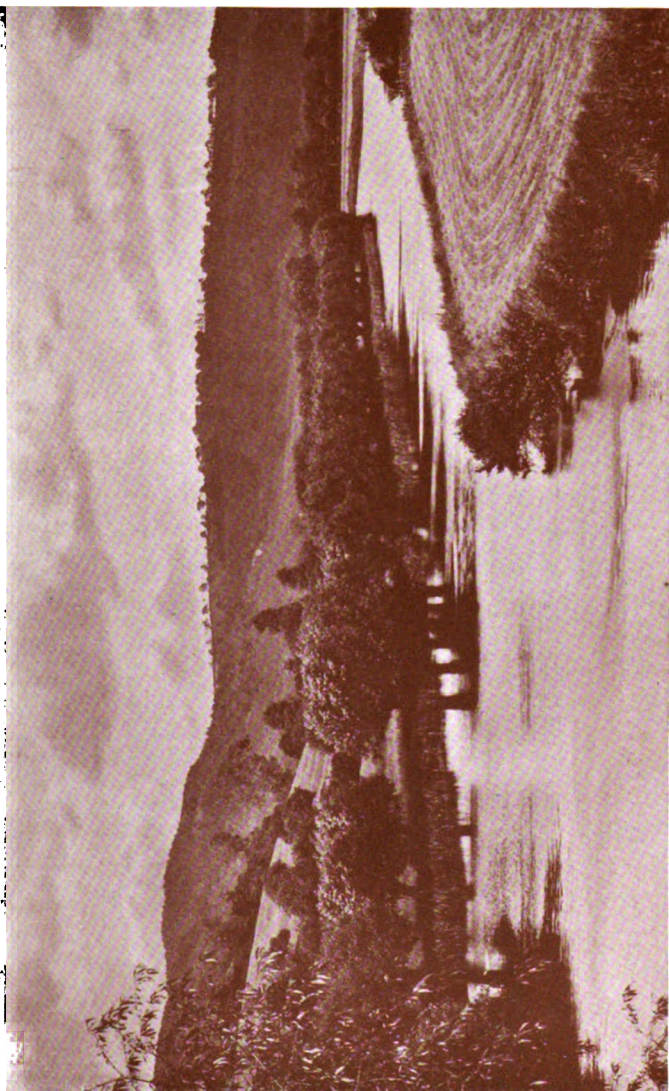
We pass away from Fladbury and when we come opposite Craycombe we leave our boat by the river-side and, finding a little-used footpath which takes us up through a plum plantation and along by the high wire fence of a pheasant preserve, we come out into an orchard towards the top of Craycombe Hill. From here we get a good view of the vale, both down Fladbury and Cropthorne way, where the river is soon hidden by woods, and in the other direction towards Evesham. Along this side of the river runs the line of hills past the English demesne of a scion of French Royalty—the Duke of Orleans. From the direction of the red houses of Evesham, which lie about four miles off, the Avon is seen to make its way, its water showing in curved and straighter stretches of silver light in the centre of the greenest of meadows. The narrow plain of the valley is broken by its hedgerows and lines of willows and other trees and, upon the

river bank, a white tent is here and there pitched, and upon the water a boat or two are afloat, and in the meadows sheep, cattle, and horses dot the green-sward, where the grass grows too fast to be close-cropped by the stock. It is a land of plenty where the soil is rich and stimulating to herb and tree, yielding a heavy increase. It is a land of peace, too, with nothing to stain its freshness or mar its beauty.

We come back to the road and river by a nearer way down through the orchard. We pass a mare with her young foal—a pretty, long-legged thing that comes up to us as we approach, seeming curious to learn what manner of creatures we are. It will not permit us to touch it, but gallops back behind its mother at the slightest attempt at any such familiarity, and so stands at a greater distance, looking back with its beautiful little head poised in an expression of wondering inquiry. The old mare shifts her gaze from ourselves to her progeny, showing the white corner of her eye as she stands in the attitude of resting her near hind hoof; her long, uncombed mane hangs down from her nape, and her head is extended in sleepy passivity. Notwithstanding the indifference she assumes to the presence of us humans, however, her manner gives us to understand that she has accomplished something redounding to her credit, of which she might be proud if she thought fit to be so; and we are ready to allow the claim and, so to say, bow our acknowledgments to her, recognising her own numerous services, and the further one she has now rendered by producing another of her kind to continue her work when she is worn out.

A rabbit leaps up from a bunch of long grass near our feet and scurries away towards the nearest hedge. A dog at Craycombe Farm, aware of the presence of strangers at a considerable distance, gives warning tongue of the fact, as it is his sentinel duty to do: whether the trespass committed be with or without damage, is a nice legal point that has nothing to do with him; his sole duty is to bark, and he barks.

So we come down from Craycombe Hill again, into the Valley of Beauty and Dear Delight, and stay on the high-road for a minute to take a last look at the whole picture of it before crossing the meadow back to our boat. Coming there at length we proceed on our way to Evesham, but as the distance is not great and the day is before us, we row in a leisurely way, making many stops to look at the wild flowers. We gather some of them to perfect ourselves in the river botany. The yellow lilies in places are scattered like pieces of gold amongst their flat, floating leaves, and the surface of the water is made pink in other places by patches of the more closely blossoming *Persicaria*; at the edge of the river yellow iris-flowers are seen, every one fit for a king's buttonhole. We gather blue forget-me-nots upon a low, damp bit of river-margin, and wear them for what they represent. There were growing near them, the arrow-head and the water-plaintain, whose delicate mauve petals are lightly strewn upon the water and float down like minute fairy boats until they come to wreck. Where the banks are dry and bare we notice the pretty pink bind-weed and the yellow St. John's-wort and, nearer the water, the long spikes of the purple loosestrife — that



By Craycombe and Wood Norton.

Near Fladbury.

glory of the river — which are extremely likely to be the “long purples” of which Shakespeare writes. There is also the leafy comfrey with its white bells; and the deliciously-scented meadow-sweet mingles its cream-white with the violet-blue of the meadow-cranes-bill and the rose-colour of the great willow-herb. There are these and other flowers, and other natural objects that catch the eye as we row along. There is the old willow, whose trunk has parted in twain and one half fallen down into the water, and the sharp angle made by the bent rush, and the crows and pigeons that fly overhead across the valley, and the green woodpecker with his harsh cry in the elm a little way off. Wild life, thriving and beautiful, is with us on every side, and, being in love with Nature, we admire and salute her as she shows herself to us in her many forms, here in Evesham Vale.

FORGET-ME-NOTS

“ See, my dear,
What I have here, —
A little flower of heavenly hue;
I saw it grow,
And stooping low,
I plucked it as a gift for you.
Could I a prettier thing have got
Than this sky-blue,
Fresh, bright and new
Forget-me-not?

“ Ah, my dear!
The time is here —
When we must say our last farewell;
And I must go,
For well I know
The story these blue blossoms tell.
Some day will bring a happier lot
And joy renew:
When far from you,
Forget me not.”

The Duke of Orleans' house now shows up plainly in the trees of the hill upon the left, and the lodge by the gate leading to the mansion is also seen. When you pass that lodge on the road you may notice that it is adorned with the Royal Badge of France, the fleur-de-lis. This place evidently appealed to the French nobleman's sense of the beautiful when he was seeking a residence in England, and the house stands on an elevated site commanding a fine view of the whole valley.

At a point where the river is not far from the road there is a gipsy encampment near the bank. The gipsies have a caravan and two carts standing near the hedge, and must have had permission to turn in from the road and use the field, as the horses are set free in it to graze. The harness is littered about the ground — here a part and there a part; a wheel is off one of the carts and lies upon the ground some distance from it. They have a fire and a pot boiling over it in true gipsy fashion. These careless rovers have found their way into the beautiful valley and we bethink ourselves of how often we have seen them occupying some such picturesque corner as that in which they are now seen, as if led there by a natural sense of artistic propriety, to form as perfect a picture of vagrant life as possible.

We are presently stopped in our onward course by a lock on the river and, so far, to-day a journey has been made from Fladbury to Chadbury, for this is Chadbury Lock. Near the lock is a mill with the miller's house, and there is also a broad weir. Chadbury has a small cluster of cottages lying off the road above the mill,



Hope and Expectation.
Chadbury Worcestershire.

but the mill with its lock and weir are the most important objects pertaining to the village. At some time the place must have been of greater importance, if one may judge by its name, the protected (or fortified) town of Chad or Ceadda. Chadbury was not the chief place of Chad however, for, about 650 A. D., he was a bishop in Mercia, with his chief seat at Lichfield. He is renowned for having converted the Saxon king, Wulfere, to Christianity by performing a miracle, in consequence of which he has been "Saint" Chad any time this last twelve hundred years. The bishop, finding Wulfere an obdurate heathen wrapt in the superstition of Thor and Woden and looking forward to nothing better than meeting his warrior relations, friends, and antecedents in Walhalla at the everlasting feast there provided for pugnacious souls, tried to lead him into gentle ways by persuasion and, being asked for some practical proof of the truth of his teaching, took off that episcopal garment known as a chasuble and threw it across a sunbeam, which sustained it in mid-air. Wulfere thought he could do the same by his own coat, but, although he called on all the gods from whom the seven days of our week take their names, he was unable to hang his coat, or even his belt and gloves, on the sunbeam, and at length, as the result of his failure, humbly submitted himself to the spiritual direction of Saint Chad.

Drawing away from Chadbury, Evesham is now approached and, within a mile of it, a hill opposite to us is pointed out as the site of the Battle of Evesham. A visit to the spot is postponed for the present as we are intent upon reaching the town. We find there is

still nearly three miles of water to cover, for the Avon here makes a deep, narrow loop, passing almost entirely round the town. The boat goes under two railway bridges that are near together, then under the rope that is stretched across the river at the ferry which is used by the people crossing from Hampton village to Evesham town and, as we turn the curve of the loop of the river, the old brown bell-tower, the only remaining building of a magnificent abbey that once belonged to Evesham, comes into sight, standing apart in all its glory near the comparatively pigmy spires of the two churches of St. Lawrence and All Saints. The boat-house of the local rowing club is also now in sight, as well as some of the houses of the town and, just the length of the little river-side park in front, is Evesham bridge. This stone bridge is in more modern and decorative style than the bridges of Tewkesbury, Eckington, and Pershore. It has not the solid, antique, everlasting air of those, but it is a handsome bridge, nevertheless, broader and more useful than the older bridges. Passing under Evesham bridge, we come to the landing-place and leave our craft in the care of the boatman.

THE VALLEY OF BEAUTY AND DEAR DELIGHT

To a beautiful vale where a bright river flows,
And where many a flower in the meadow-land grows,
Came a journeying soul to seek rest on his way
To the glorious hills of the Giver-of-Day;
And he made plaint to Conscience, who went as his guide:
" All too brief is our stay by this green river-side;
Oh, guide, very good are the pleasures in sight,
In this Valley of Beauty and Dear Delight."

Then the soul plucked the flowers in the river-side field;
Breathed the honey-sweet scents which their bright blossoms
yield;

Felt the tender, cool touch of the grass where he lay,
'Neath the blue and white sky on a fair summer day;
And he heard the bird sing in the shade of the wood,
And he drank a deep draught of the river's clear flood:
" Oh, guide," said the soul, " why away to the height,
From this Valley of Beauty and Dear Delight?"

" To the hills," said the guide; and the soul said, " I hear."
But the word brought a passionate cry at his ear;
And the soul turned to gaze in Love's pitiful face,
As she clung in a tremulous, tearful embrace.
" Leave me not; leave me not, I beseech thee," she said;
" To those far-away hills dark the way thou must tread;
Oh, soul of my soul, tarry with me to-night
In this Valley of Beauty and Dear Delight."

But the soul might not stay, nor delay, for time pressed;
So he tenderly put Love away from his breast;
Then he left the bright river, and passed on his way,
Through the gate toward the hills of the Giver-of-Day;
And his God-given guide spoke him thus in good cheer:
" Though the highway be dark, there is nothing to fear;
Oh, soul, thou has left all the terrors of night
In the Valley of Beauty and Dear Delight!"

CHAPTER XI

EVESHAM

THE way up into the town from the boat-houses leads over the bridge, from which there are interesting views, especially from the lower side, where there is an under-the-linden walk by the river. There, upon shady seats, the people sit and read or knit in the summer-time, or promenade the gravel paths. From the bridge the street ascends steeply, and this is Bridge Street, of course, and in Evesham, Bridge Street takes precedence of High Street in the matter of shops, and as being the centre of business, or, at least, so the people of Bridge Street will tell you. In the middle of Bridge Street is the Crown Hotel, and this is an inn of engaging appearance. There is an old house at the top of Bridge Street, at the entrance to the market-place, with wood and plaster walls, very similar in shape to a house built of cards. This was originally an ancient hall for public meeting, called the Booth Hall, the lower storey being used for a covered market. Long ago it became too incommodious for the purposes of a public hall, and in the reign of Henry VIII. or Elizabeth, it was found necessary to build the plain but useful Guild Hall which stands on the other side of the market-place.

We come into the market-place, that very ancient



A Corner of the Market Place.
Evesham, Worcestershire.

square, set apart of old time for commercial dealings in the products of the surrounding country, and the manufactures of the town. From lone farm and hamlet the countrymen were ever wont to start upon a journey to Evesham market, and, arriving there, proceeded to offer the animals that had been driven in for show, or the vegetable produce of the land, represented in bulk or sample; and, having effected their sales, they made purchases from the stalls of the merchants who exhibited their various wares prominently in the open air, to attract the eyes of customers. In the old time the market for cattle and sheep extended on to the cobble stones in High Street, and the horse-fair into Vine Street, near the market-place. Fine, lusty boors they doubtless were who, for hundreds of years, came to Evesham market, rough of speech and appearance, unkempt, unlettered. But that old order has passed: there is no longer a market in the open market-place. The farmers have provided themselves with a fine building called the Corn Exchange; the cattle are sold at fortnightly sales at a convenient sale-yard near the railway, the products of the gardens are taken to the station to be delivered by the railway company to consignees in distant great cities, and the town merchants no longer place their goods upon stalls, or upon the ground, but every one has a shop with a plate glass window. The old market-place remains much the same, however, and still possesses some of its original houses, though its square space may now be but the playground of boys, or serve the purpose of a broad thoroughfare, not thronged with marketers, but trodden by the people who go to the

post-office, or the town hall, or the public library and the corn-exchange, or to church, for out of one corner goes a footway by some half-timbered buildings and through the entrance known as Abbot Reginald's gateway into the churchyard.

The centre of Evesham is at the entrance to the market-place, where Bridge Street and High Street and Vine Street meet. Vine Street way you come to Boat Lane, leading to the Ferry, by which you cross the Avon to Clarke's Hill and the pleasant village of Hampton, where the ferryman's cottage, with the trees and river, make a charming picture. The High Street, Evesham, is very broad. There are several old lanes leading off it; one to the mill, and another to the vegetable market. You go down High Street, and past the railway station, and up Green Hill to get to Alcester and Stratford by road.

It is a rich, alluvial soil about Evesham, from which, under an industrious tillage, good crops are constantly obtained, and full many a market-gardener has come to have a substantial account at the local bank, as a result of the heavy and quickly repeated cuttings and gatherings in his gardens. This vale of Evesham has been a place of gardens for centuries. Its great fertility has been the envy of all would-be owners from times remote, and the splendid harvests obtained have been constantly noted by those reporting upon the state of the town and locality.

At the railway station there is great traffic in hampers and baskets, containing flowers, fruits, and vegetables, their kind varying with the seasons — strawberries and bush fruit, plums, apples and tomatoes, asparagus,



Hampton Ferry.

Near Evesham.

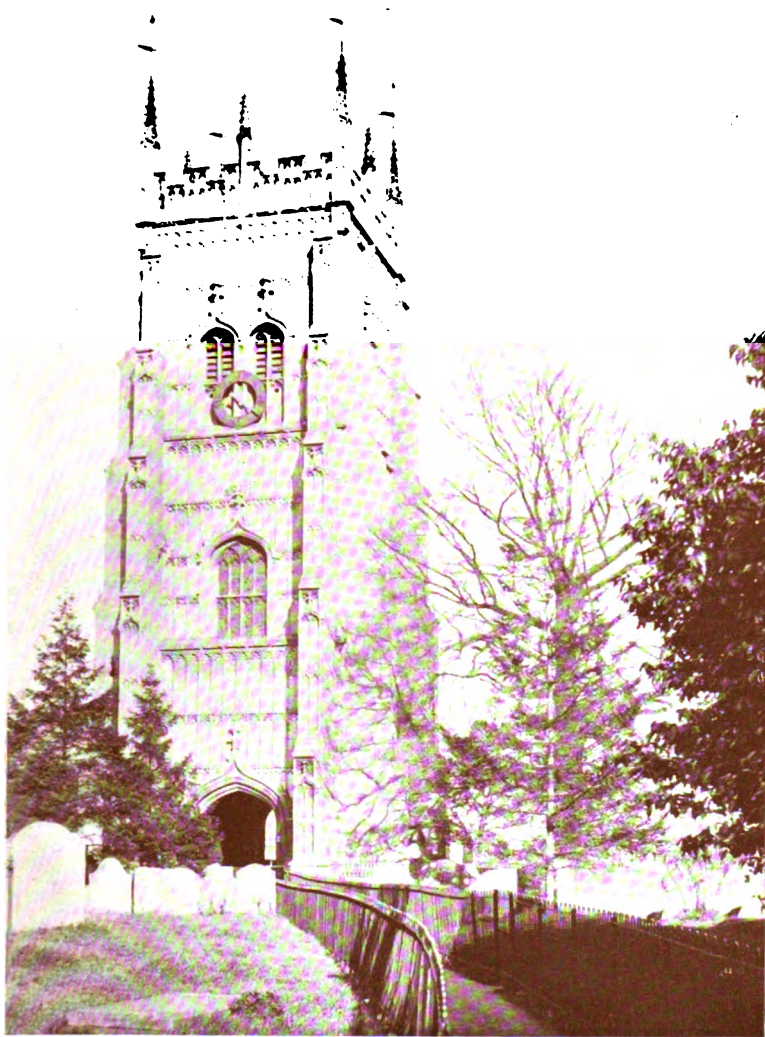
peas, beans and all sorts of savoury herbs — and all destined to appear in the green-grocer's shops in far-away places, including Birmingham and the Black Country towns, where the local appearances of streets and surroundings are in such acute contrast to those of this green garden ham of Eoves — Eve-sham, as we call it, Ev-e-sham, as some miscall it, or E-sam, as the gardeners themselves call it.

To tell how Evesham came by its name requires another story of Bishop Ecgwin, which also involves the relation of how the great Abbey of Evesham was founded. The land was covered with a swart forest that yielded nothing better than wood, and acorns and beech-mast that were good for feeding swine. A simple swineherd, by the name of Eoves, who tended his pigs in that part of the forest which is so nearly enclosed by the Avon, met with a strange adventure, for he saw — whether awake or dreaming — a vision of angels in the forest here. The bishop, upon hearing of the extraordinary appearance, at once sought the swineherd and accompanied him to the spot, where the angels again appeared headed by the holy virgin who intimated to Ecgwin that the spot was sanctified, and he consequently founded the abbey just at that place, and dedicated it to the Holy Virgin Mary. The founding of the Abbey was the beginning of the town which was named after Eoves the swineherd, Eovesham, now Evesham. This fable is contained in a very ancient Saxon document, one of two or three which purport to be charters of agreement by which Kendred, king of the Mercians, and Offa, king of the East Angles agreed with Bishop Ecgwin as to the building and

endowment of the Abbey. A vast number of manors and other property were given into the possession of the bishop who resigned his see at Worcester and became the first Abbot of Evesham. It was King Ethelred, predecessor of Kendred, who first conveyed the land upon which Evesham now stands to Ecgwin. The latter is described in one of the charters as the "venerable man, Bishop Ecgwin." The pope, Constantine I., also contributed an epistle signed with "the sign of the Holy Cross," and countersigned by Ecgwin, Kendred, and Offa, in confirmation of the business of founding the abbey, the whole of which took place between the years 700 and 710 A. D.

Bishop Ecgwin is said to have had great power of oratory, and it may be that the story of the appearance of the virgin and angels arose out of some figure he used in preaching, and afterwards came to be accepted as a fact. The other story of the bishop's journey to Rome with his feet shackled is probably, to some extent, true. It may have been that the bishop, on being accused by his defamers, said that he would bind himself a prisoner until he had proved his innocence, and so put the chain about his feet until freed by the pope of the accusation. At all events the shackling chain was adopted for the arms of the Abbey, which were in heraldic parlance: azure, a chain in chevron with a ring in the dexter and a horselock in the sinister between three mitres labelled, or. One of the original ancient seals of the Abbey also shows Eoves, the herdsman, with some of his pigs.

Ecgwin made a second journey to Rome; this time



The Bell Tower.

Evesham.

in the company of Kings Kendred and Offa as mentioned in the Saxon Chronicle. In the Romish Calendar the venerable bishop stands a saint along with Augustine and Dunstan.

The Saxon buildings were not permanent structures and it was only when the Normans came in that the great and beautiful Abbey of Evesham came into being with its accompanying extensive Benedictine monastery. The ground plan of the buildings has been made out, and the abbey appears to have been built in the usual cruciform style, with a Norman nave, transepts and central tower, and an Early English choir, the whole forming a glorious pile, the central tower probably competing in height and grandeur with the great tower of Durham. After the dissolution of the monasteries the whole of the buildings were destroyed, until a grass-grown heap alone remained of the abbey and its appendages, with the exception of a bell tower, which originally stood detached near one of the transepts and was comparatively new when the fatal visitors from King Henry VIII. arrived to take notes and make report to the "Court of Augmentation," appointed to receive the revenues of the monasteries. Some of the stones of the abbey now form a neighbouring garden wall, and in that wall there is an archway, still standing, which is said to have formed the doorway of the chapter-house. There is also a house existing which was once the almonry of the monastery. The only object of any considerable interest remaining is the fine bell-tower, whose sides are ornamented with panels, and its base arched through to form a gateway. This stands alone in solitary splen-

dour, and is still a useful receptacle for the bells, which chime pleasantly and ring tunes as at Pershore.

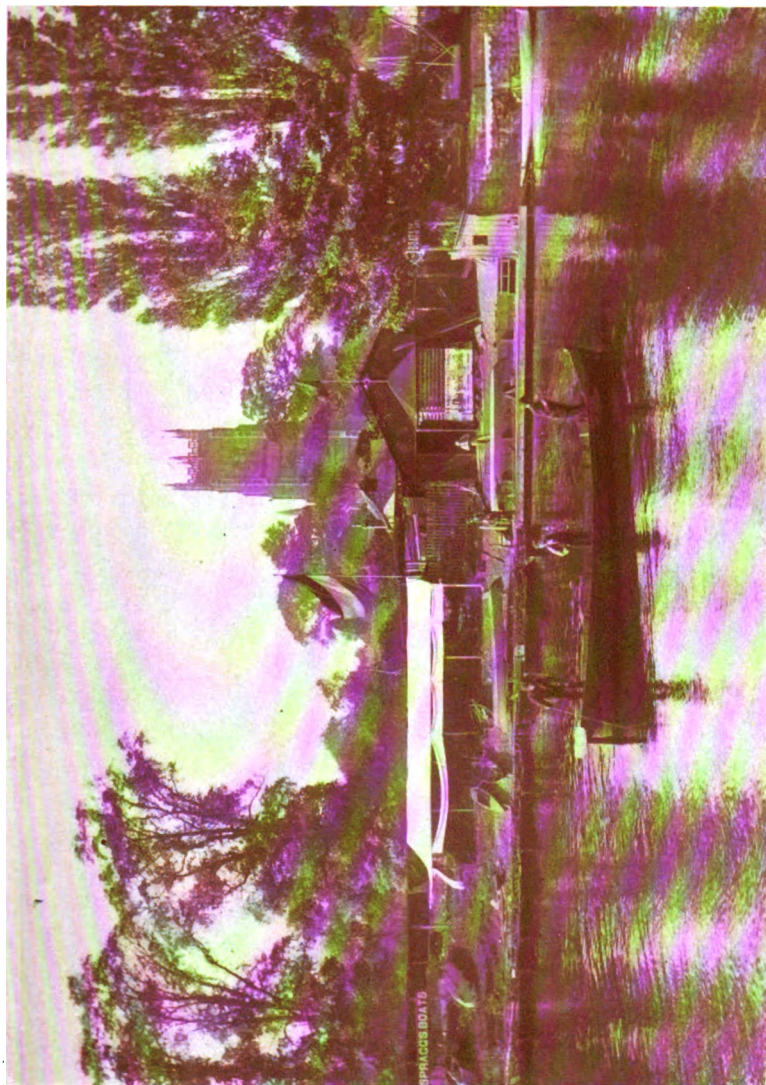
An extraordinary thing connected with the Abbey of Evesham was that in immediate contiguity to it stood two separate churches the two parish churches of Evesham, dedicated to St. Lawrence and All Saints. The existence of these churches makes it appear as if no part of the abbey was used as a place of worship by the public, and yet it seems unlikely that so large a church as the Abbey should have been limited to the sole use of the inmates of the monastery. At Tewkesbury and Pershore it could be pleaded that the abbeys there were partly used for public worship and could not consequently be held to be so entirely superfluous as to require absolute demolition, and it may be that the fact of these two parish churches existing here acted adversely to any part of Evesham Abbey being saved. The two parish churches, which are at least as old as the thirteenth century, still stand, being enclosed in the same churchyard, and having the Abbey bell tower very near to them. From time to time they have been repaired, and they continue to serve the main church requirements of Evesham. The church of St. Lawrence contains a small decorated chapel, named after Abbot Clement Lichfield, who is said himself to have designed it, as well as the bell tower of the Abbey, having been endowed with great architectural talent. In All Saints' Church is also a similar chapel decorated with good fan vaulting, in which the same Abbot-architect is buried.

Having passed out of the market place through Abbot Reginald's gateway, which was once a proper

archway, but is now topped by part of an ancient dwelling, we enter the churchyard, and going between the two churches, Abbot Clement's bell-tower stands up in brown stone before us. This tower is said to be the last architectural work of any considerable note that was performed in England by monk builders. As we stand before it we can, in imagination, restore the ancient religious régime, and from the foundation stones that lie beneath the soil under our feet, raise again the glorious arches and massive tower of the Abbey of Evesham. The Abbot is in residence with the Prior and the various obedienciaries and monks without special office, all dressed in the black broad-sleeved habits and hoods of the Benedictine fraternity. They apply themselves to labour, recreation, or service in the church. The prayers, chants, and recitations are numerous, from matins at midnight, to lauds, mass, vespers, and compline at their various hours, and together with the time devoted to reading, writing, or other work in the cloisters, and the discussion of temporal affairs in the chapter-house, and the necessary meals in the refectory, make each succeeding day a full one. The almoner administers charity to every beggar who presents himself. The guest-master receives those of means who have called at the Abbey upon special business, or merely to use the accommodation it offers to the traveller, who is received as a friend and led into the guest-house, his name and rank being reported to the Abbot forthwith. The cellarer enters upon his general duty of steward, seeing that all the necessities of living are provided in appropriate quantity without waste, and the various things he

purchases or gives out of store are handed to the kitchen to be further dealt with. Thus there is a hum of life within and without the Abbey; that within being always subdued, every movement and act subject to strict regulation and time, even to the "consolation of conversation." Not that laughter and the cheerful spirit are in any way tabooed, but only postponed to fitting time and season. And the movement without is of people coming and going, for the Abbey, from having been the original cause of the town's building, remains the centre of chief interest within it, and the townspeople have much business to do with it, for it employs the tradesmen besides tending the sick and infirm, and looking after the spiritual welfare of the populace generally. The tonsured black monks are seen about the streets, and in the old market-place, which is but just outside the Abbey gates, and are recognised of the townsmen by their fraternal names and are known and respected, or beloved, according to their personal characters, which must vary, even as those of other men, notwithstanding their selection, training, and election to the following of their First Head.

But no, it is but a fancy. The Abbey is gone and the monks are gone with it, and the religious fervour, which caused the erection of these great churches, upon which so much time and labour and wealth was lavished, and which made men relinquish freedom and the pleasures of worldly living to devote themselves to prayer, contemplation, and the life of the Christian teaching, so far as they understood it, is now at low tide.



View across the River.

Evesham.

Under the archway of the bell-tower the path leads through a couple of green fields to the river side. One of these fields is Evesham's playground, and during the year there are several lively shows, or fairs, held here. At the bank lies the steamer, which takes passengers upon little pleasure trips down the river on summer afternoons, to Fladbury and Pershore, and there is also a second place to hire boats for rowing on this side of the bridge, as well as the house of the Evesham rowing club. From under the linden tree of the little park on the opposite side of the river there is a very good view across the Avon and up to the bell-tower, and this is where the fashion of the locality congregates upon regatta day to view the boat-races. The Borough of Evesham was originally limited by the river, all the buildings on the opposite side belonging to the parish of Bengeworth. The little park above mentioned is on the Bengeworth side and near it is a chief inn of the locality, "The Northwick Arms." But the considerable parish of Bengeworth is now a part of Evesham, authority having been obtained to extend the boundary so as to include it.

A story is told of one William de Beauchamp, who, some eight hundred years ago, had a castle at Bengeworth. He made the great mistake of seeking a quarrel with a neighbour who was infinitely more powerful than himself. Taking advantage of the absence of the Abbot, he led his men across the Avon and carried off from Evesham Abbey as large a quantity of its goods and chattels as he could lay hands upon. The distance was not far and the plunderers probably made more

than one journey. Soon afterwards the people of Bengeworth, through the intervention of the Abbot of Evesham, were enabled to bury their dead in a graveyard that now occupied the site where once had stood the castle of William de Beauchamp.

Whilst at Evesham we take journeys of discovery into the country round, and visit the numerous old agricultural villages which lie within pedestrian distance, or an easy cycle ride of the town. Through Bengeworth we visit Wickhamford, Badsey, and Bretforton, which are near together. The houses of these villages are chiefly stone built. They possess old stone manors and farms where the cows are milked, and the product sent away in big churns. In Wickhamford church is a memorial stone to the memory of Penelope, daughter of Colonel Henry Washington, obit Feb. 27, 1697. A portion of the Washington Arms is exhibited on the stone showing the stars and stripes, from which originated the star-spangled banner of the United States. Bretforton is on one of the main roads, and is a pleasing old village, where the Hall and the Manor House face each other in their respective grounds on either side of the road; and the space known as The Cross, from which the cross is now missing, has a primitive beer-house on one side of it, with benches placed outside, in the backyard by the pump, where some good old-fashioned rustics are likely to be met with, taking their beer out of doors. Within is a low-roofed kitchen, with a high-backed settle, and on the shelves a pewter service of plates and dishes, such as is very rarely to be seen in these days. Collectors are hereby petitioned to leave them



Breaking the Young Steers to the Plough.

The Cotswold Hills

in peace, as they look best in their native atmosphere. We visit the beer-house first, but that is without prejudice to the merits of the church at Bretforton, which is quite a pretty church, with a waggon roof and the plain stone of its walls cleanly pointed with blue mortar. We find it open — a matter upon which the vicar may be congratulated, for it is the way of many vicars to keep their churches locked up and the public rigorously excluded, excepting for the two or three hours once a week, when the Sunday services are in progress, and if under these circumstances the public lose interest in the churches, it is no more than is to be expected.

From Bretforton it is but a couple of miles to Cow Honeybourne, whose name is suggestive of the sort of place it is. It has a large village green, and two or three short streets of cottages, besides larger houses and farmyards, and a wheelwright's shop, where all manner of derelict vehicles and farm implements stand waiting repairs, or are being painted or tinkered at. There are few inhabitants about of the human species, and the place is noiseless except for the cooing of pigeons, the twitter of swallows, and the occasional crow of a cock.

We also visit Broadway, a large village at the base of the Cotswold Hills, six miles from Evesham. It is a favourite place for tourists of artistic tastes, who are well pleased with the appearance of its long chief street as viewed from above, looking down, or from below, looking up. The houses are of brown stone, some with gabled dormer windows, dating back to Tudor times. The country, too, is very pretty along the base of the hills, which run down in unbroken line beyond

Cheltenham, and up the other way to near Stratford. The main street of Broadway goes a short distance up the hill, which afterwards becomes steep, and takes one right to the top of the Cotswolds, and Broadway Tower is up there. We climb up to the tower to enjoy the outlook, which is of great range. The country that lies across the hills is of quite a different character from that of the fruit-growing vale, which is seen from the abrupt edge of the hills lying below. Up there the ground is of a stony nature, with many stone-built field fences, and stone houses everywhere and treeless tracts of land. Looking at a map we find the positions upon these Cotswold Hills of the small towns of Stow-on-the-Wold, Chipping Campden, Bourton-on-the-Water, Northleach, Cirencester, and Stroud, all in Gloucestershire. On the hills you may see many flocks of sheep in hurdle folds, and Carter Tom breaks the young steers to work at the plough, not in yokes, but just in collars and traces, like horses.

Broadway is itself, however, in Worcestershire, as are Evesham and Pershore, and many another pleasant town, and we remain by the tower for a long time contemplating the beauty of this last mentioned county, for practically the whole of it lies in sight before us, so extensive is the view.

After this we still have to make a journey of discovery amongst the low rolling hills to the North of Evesham, when we visit all the villages and hamlets that bear the end-name of Lench. There are quite a family of the Lenches — Church Lench, Abbot's Lench, Rous Lench, Sherrif's Lench and Lenchwick. These places, along with Harvington and Norton,



The Turnip Field.

On the Cotswold Hills.

contain many houses with black wooden beams built in their walls, similar to those at Wick and Cropthorne. Some of these villages have fine old churches. Norton Church, for instance, is dedicated to Saint Ecgwin, and contains some interesting monuments and relics.

In returning from Norton we pass the site of the Battle of Evesham, which lies no more than a mile from the centre of the town, upon the first of the Lench Hills, locally known as Green Hill.

It was Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, the great soldier and leader of the Barons, who was opposing Henry III. and his son, Prince Edward, with the object of wringing from the king further concessions in the direction of more popular government, and relaxation of the feudal laws, which gave the king supreme power. There had been a battle at Lewes, in which king and prince had been taken prisoners, since when they had been held in durance by de Montfort. Some of the barons, out of jealousy of the Earl, or out of loyalty for the king, formed an opposition party, and having arranged an escape for Prince Edward, they placed him at their head, and he soon found himself master of a considerable force and took up quarters at Worcester. De Montfort was west of the Severn with an army largely consisting of Welsh, which he had gathered together on the borders of Herefordshire and Monmouthshire, and he desired to join forces with his son, who lay at Kenilworth. He found some difficulty in crossing the Severn, most of the towns upon that river being held for the prince. Ultimately he got across at Kempsey and from the Severn bank marched to Evesham.

The prince, being well informed of his enemies' movements, made a sudden descent upon Kenilworth in the night — "a Saturday night it was, at Lammas tide" — and finding young de Montfort's men sleeping outside the castle in the town, in a very unguarded way, surprised them, killed some and took some prisoners, whilst others hardly escaped into the castle in their night-shirts. The prince's men also seized a large number of horses, then retired again to Worcester as quickly as they had come.

It is shortly after this raid upon Kenilworth that de Montfort reaches Evesham. His son, setting out from Kenilworth to meet his father, arrives at Alcester the same evening, when the two armies are within ten miles of each other and can easily make contact the same evening, if so determined, but they do not. King Henry III., who is travelling with de Montfort as prisoner, and yet as king, desires to stay at Evesham to sup with the Abbot, and the Earl humours him in this request, whilst the younger de Montfort will not budge from Alcester without first taking supper and rest. Prince Edward gives out that he is going to Bridgenorth and feigns to march away from Worcester in that direction, and this news is brought to de Montfort. It is sixteen miles from Worcester to Evesham, a distance not too great for a despatch to be borne in an hour by a fleet horseman. So Earl Simon settles comfortably down to supper and to stay the night at Evesham Abbey. The kindly Abbot makes the most of the opportunity of giving hospitality to both the King and the Earl, and we may be sure the accounts of the cellarer will show some special provision for the Abbot's

table upon this evening; in fact, everything is of the best, and there is plenty of it, and the consciousness of the martial Earl is lulled and he forgets the very dangerous position his army is occupying in that narrow peninsula made by the Avon as it winds round Evesham. The night passes and they rise in the morning to take a hearty breakfast before bidding the Abbot farewell. It has been reported that the forces of the younger de Montfort are now approaching from Alcester by Green Hill, and the Earl's barber ascends the abbey tower to watch their friends make the entrance of the town. He looks forth, then hurriedly returns with the alarming information that the approaching army bears the ensigns of Prince Edward and those of Mortimer and de Clare, his two chief supporters. The bridge, over which lies the only other way out of the town, is found to have been taken by men sent round upon the other side of the river for the purpose, and there is no escape. De Montfort himself takes a view of the situation, and notes with what good generalship he is being attacked, and cries out, half in pride and half in regret, "By the arm of St. James, they come on in wise fashion, but it was from me that they learned that order. Now let us commend our souls to God, for our bodies are our enemies'!"

At this time the sky grows dark and whilst hurried orders are being given to marshall the troops, a terrific thunderstorm bursts over the scene, drowning the sound of the great bell that is calling the inmates of the monastery to early mass, and seeming to indicate the wrath of the higher Powers at the carnage that has begun. The six thousand Welshmen are sent forward

to resist the oncoming army of Edward, but give way before the first onslaught of the latter, and then begins "The murder of Evesham." The Welshmen cannot be rallied, but are hunted from their cover amongst the cherry and apple trees of the Evesham gardens, and slain mercilessly, or driven into the Avon to drown. A band of knights surrounds de Montfort, and these, by furious fighting, make their way up on to Green Hill, but pressed on every side by superior numbers, they fail to cut their way through and fall one by one dead, or sorely wounded. The Earl's second son, Henry de Montfort, goes down by his father's side, and the old lion himself is bleeding from many wounds. "Yield, yield!" they cry to him, and he replies proudly and with disdain, "Never will I surrender to dogs and perjurers, but to God alone!" He means the stigma for de Clare, Mortimer, and others of his false friends, who swore to support him in his demands for reforms and afterwards seceded to the Prince. So Simon de Montfort falls fighting like a hero and murmuring as he gives up the ghost, "It is God's grace."

They killed him and treated his remains barbarously, but they admired him notwithstanding his faults. He had a place in the affections of the populace, and after his death, when they had had time to reflect upon it, they admired him more. Then they remembered him as "Sir Simon the Righteous," and many pilgrims came to his tomb in Evesham Abbey for the cure of their ailments, which such a visit was reputed to effect. Several songs and even a liturgy were composed in his honour, and, what was of chief consequence, the principles of popular government which he initiated and



An Incident in the Battle of Evesham.

The pedestal of an obelisk on the battleground at Abbey Manor,
Evesham.

advocated were not forgotten. He had done his work and was the declining star; Prince Edward was the rising one, for as King Edward I., as we all know, he proved himself a most capable monarch, soldier, ruler, law-giver — the English Justinian.

So the first great champion of English liberty died, greater in his death than in his life, and his dust is mingled with that of many a saintly monk amidst the foundation-stones of the ruined abbey. In the middle of last century a monument was set up to his memory and placed not far from the spot where he was killed upon the field of the Battle of Evesham. It is in the form of a tower in the architectural style of the age to which it relates, and stands in a copse that borders the Worcester road a mile from Evesham. Its embattled summit rises nearly as high as the trees which screen it from the road. We see it in the evening light when a number of rooks and jackdaws are circling over it, and the highly cultivated country round about lies serene and at peace. The Avon flows down the lovely vale which is but across the road, and near at hand is the mansion called Abbey Manor. Over a doorway in the tower is inscribed —

THIS TOWER
ERECTED IN THE YEAR MDCCCXLII
TO THE MEMORY OF
SIMON DE MONTFORT
EARL OF LEICESTER
THE FATHER AND FOUNDER OF
THE BRITISH HOUSE OF COMMONS
WHO WAS SLAIN AT THE BATTLE OF EVESHAM
IN THE YEAR MCCLXV.

Abbey Manor, the mansion just mentioned, has a beautiful garden in which may be seen some remnant stones of Evesham Abbey, which have been placed there, and also an obelisk carved with a representation of an incident of the Battle of Evesham. Henry III. went into the battle with de Montfort's men, armed in plate mail and with helmet and visor, and was attacked by one of his son's soldiers, when he cried out, "I am Henry of Winchester, your king. Do not kill me!" On the other sides of the pedestal of the obelisk there are carved heraldic designs and some writing including a quotation of some length from Drayton's *Polyolbion*.

Once again Evesham was the scene of fighting when in 1645 Cromwell's indefatigable General Massey came upon the scene. King Charles I. was several times through Evesham and stayed at least one night at a house in Bridge Street. The town lay upon the main road between his two faithful cities of Oxford and Worcester, and he left a garrison at Evesham under Colonel Legge. Massey, who had successfully held the city of Gloucester against the investing army of King Charles and who had been much in evidence in this Western country, where the last embers of the Royalist cause were flickering towards extinction, came this way, having about fifteen hundred men under his command. He summoned Legge to surrender, but the latter replied that he would "hold the town as bid by his king." In this, however, he was not so good as his word. Massey assaulted the town simultaneously in six places, and "with great fury," and after firing off a great deal of ineffective powder,



*Edward Massey Esq. Major General
of the west*

He defended Gloucester when that city was invested by King Charles I., and carried Evesham by storm when that town was fortified and held for the King.

(From a rare old print.)

Legge surrendered, and the victorious Massey was able to report that he had taken prisoner seventy officers and nearly five hundred men, a performance which brought him great credit.

In the time of Simon de Montfort portraiture was unfortunately an undeveloped art, but four hundred years later both painting and engraving had reached an advanced stage of perfection. Even the fiery Rupert, when the war was over, took up engraving with enthusiasm, especially that species called mezzotint, and practised it successfully until his fighting spirit again got the upper hand, and he went off buccaneering upon the high seas. The old rough line portrait that has been left us of General Massey introduces us to a person whose appearance is in accordance with his character, for he looks very fierce in his armour notwithstanding his beautiful long hair.

HAMPTON FERRY

The lads of the village, on marketing day,
Go over to Evesham the readiest way:
There are merry dark Dick, quiet Ned, and big Jerry,
And the readiest way is by Hampton old ferry.
At the ferryman's cottage by Avon's green side
Lives the lass that each wishes to win for his bride;
But though each lad declares it is he loves her well,
For which lover she cares as yet neither can tell.
"Then it's hey, pretty lass, come along to the wherry!"
And the ferryman's daughter came out of her door;
When dark Dick raised his cap, and "Good morning," said Jerry
And Ned helped her pull to the opposite shore.

Then Jerry addressed her with talk and with sighs;
Dick gave her a glance of his merry dark eyes;
And she looked back at Dick, and she laughed back at Jerry
And her hand touched Ned's hand on the rope of the ferry.

Then dark Dick said he wished she would come to the town,
 And she asked " Will you take me?" which made Jerry frown;
 Ned had nothing to say till the boat reached the land,
 But a whole language lay in that touch of his hand.

" Then it's hey, pretty lass, all alone in the wherry!"

For the ferryman's daughter went back to her door;

Whilst three men stood watching her crossing the ferry,

Ere to market they went from the opposite shore.

When market was over said Jerry, " I say,

Come home by the bridge; I am going that way;"

But as down the Boat Lane the two went to the ferry —

Quiet Ned and dark Dick — they fell in with big Jerry.

Said he, " What do you think of the girl at the inn?

She is fond of you, Ned; why not go in and win?"

Said dark Dick, " That is true." " She is just the right sort

For Jerry or you," was Ned's quiet retort.

" Then it's hey, pretty lass, bring us over the wherry!"

'Twas the ferryman's wife who came out of the door:

Which made merry Dick wink his dark eye at Jerry,

But Ned helped her pull to the opposite shore.

Shouted merry dark Dick, " We will leave you to pay;"

And he and big Jerry went laughing away.

Quiet Ned paid three pence, and still stayed by the ferry,

Very glad to be rid of dark Dick and big Jerry;

For the moon rose up high above Hampton church tower,

And Jessie came out looking sweet as a flower.

" Will you come to church, Jess?" whispered Ned in her ear;

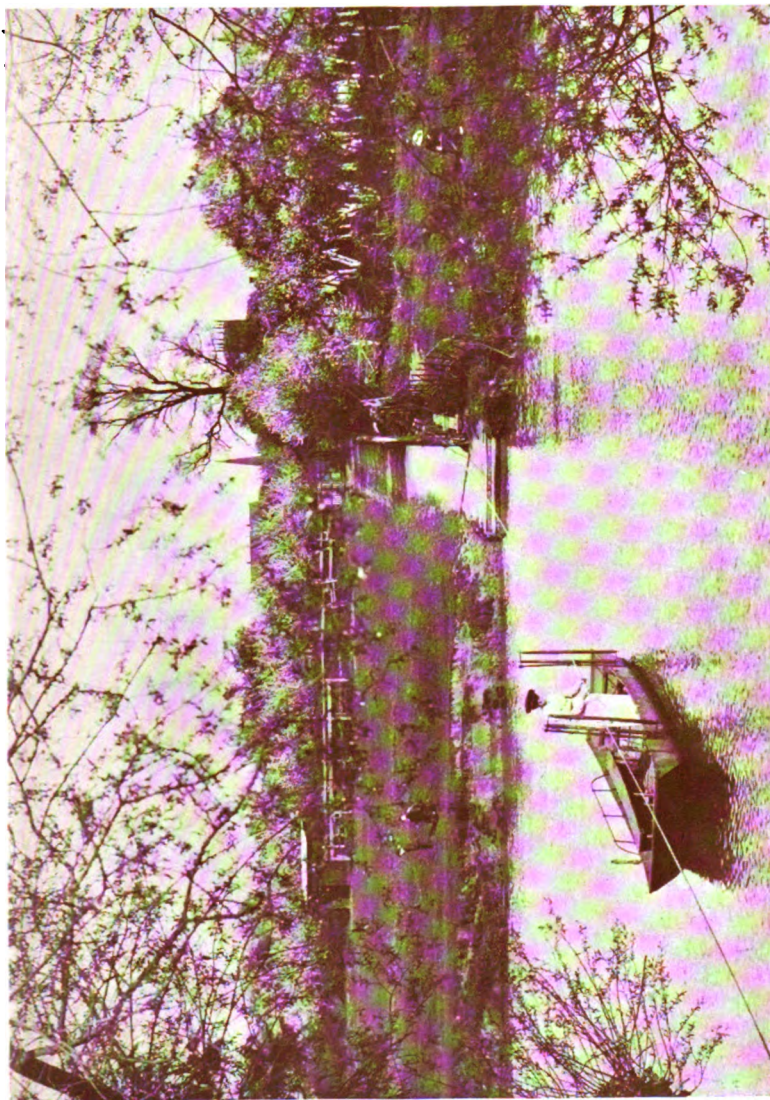
And her answer was, " Yes; if you'll wait till next year."

" Then it's hey, pretty lass, come you into my wherry!"

Said Ned as he kissed her " Good-night " at the door;

" And life shall be easy as crossing the ferry,

When together we pull to the opposite shore."



When the Plum-tree is in Bloom.

Hampton Ferry, Evesham.

CHAPTER XII

FROM EVESHAM TO CLEEVE MILL

THERE is a lock at Evesham within a short distance of the bridge. It is not necessary for small boats to go through this, as rollers have been provided for pulling them up over the dam into the water that stands at the higher level above, and this operation is soon accomplished. Evesham Mill is above the dam, and a waggon is standing near from which sacks are being hoisted into the mill, whilst adjacent is the old lock with its black gates and gaunt arms. A little higher up, the booth and stage of the river swimming-bath is passed, with a punt moored against it, and from here there is a good view ending with the mill and the lock and, beyond these, the brown stone bell-tower of the Abbey — the Abbey that once was, but is no more.

The morning of our departure from Evesham is misty and, as the distance from the above named objects is increased, the view of them becomes softened and indistinct, simulating the effect of time upon the remembrance of things known in the past. So, in the lapse of long time, have faded the harsh cruelties of the wars, and the errors that brought discord and destruction to the people as at the great battle of Evesham. And so have faded those greater cruelties perpetrated in connection with stupid, man-made creeds,

until we are lost in wonderment that human kind could ever have been seized by prejudices so hurtful to humanity. Peace and happiness are jeopardized when we depend too greatly upon abstract thinking, assisted when we pay chief attention to simple acts and facts, such as the cultivation of the plum-tree. We have taken our last look at the buildings of Evesham, and are now passing a reminder of its chief industry, an extensive plantation where the plums load the branches with a heavy weight of yellow and red fruit. How beautiful they are, and what a number of plum pies—and what thousands of jam tarts and rolled-up puddings they will make! Above the shores of the Rhine grow grapes; by the waters of the Euphrates, figs; in the Valley of the Avon, plums. The Valley is also a beautiful sight in the spring when the plum-trees are in blossom.

WHEN THE PLUM-TREE IS IN BLOOM

When the plum-tree is in bloom
 What gladness fills each bosom!
 For as comes a bride to wed,
 Spring steps in garlanded,
 In a snowy wreath of blossom.
 Then the celandines unfold
 April's stock of shining gold —
 Spring for her spending needs such store of treasure —
 Hark! The lark is in the sky;
 See! The new-come swallows fly,
 And all the world is sunshine, joy, and pleasure.

When the plum-tree is in bloom
 What rapture fills each bosom!
 For, as in the tempered heat
 Of a spring sun, white and sweet,

Lovebuds burst to tender blossom.
 Then each fond and gentle heart
 Opens wide to take its part
 In the gifts of love and loving God has given,
 Ere the pearly petals die,
 And the swallow flashes by,
 And the soaring lark drops down to earth from heaven.

The fine piece of water over which we now pass shows a line of willows at the edge of the river behind our boat, which leads the eye back to the red brick and tile house called Park's Farm. This stands in a commanding position at some slight elevation above the water amongst surrounding trees. One of the trees which we now notice as occurring with greater frequency is the alder tree. The alder is happiest close by the brook or river, and frequently its roots protrude from the edge of the bank and its trunk leans lovingly over the water, the branches making a deep shade where the tree stands with its dark green, dense foliage. The fisherman comes along and drops his bait below its roots, expecting such a place to be the lair of a lusty chub or bream, and the tree often affords a convenience for tying up your boat. The mouth of another tributary brook is here passed, which comes down from Badsey and Bretforton way, one of the many, on this or that side, which bring in water to the Avon. They partake largely of the character of the river, being slow-flowing streams, but, as they are of small size, they are sometimes quite hidden by the trees and bushes beneath whose branches they make their winding way.

This part of the Avon is frequented by boating parties from Evesham, and we are passed by, or

ourselves pass, several rowing boats, punts or canoes. The punts are chiefly used for fishing, and for this purpose are generally moored to some chosen spot. We remark that the Avon, in its lower part, is not a good river for the use of the punting pole, its depth being too great and uncertain for that mode of propulsion. The people in the boats are merry and gay, for the greater part, and it is amusing to notice the different people that make up each party. A boat that passes is swiftly rowed by strong-armed men, who may be practising for the races of an approaching regatta; and a boat that is passed is heavily loaded with non-rowers, where the poor little man, who has probably volunteered to bring his party up the river, is labouring gallantly under the task he has set himself, unthinkingly, to perform. His hat is pushed back from his perspiring brow, and his great and prolonged exertions are stimulated ever anew when he sees a boat overtaking him.

We arrive at "The Bridge," that well-known inn at Offenham Ferry, two miles above Evesham, called "The Bridge" on account of there having once been a bridge there. Now there is only a ferry, with footpaths coming to it through the fields, affording a short cut to any pedestrian who wishes to make the passage to or from the village of Offenham. Numbers of people pass along that footpath; you may see them coming and going at any time of day, and the ferryman is continuously on the look-out for them, so that it is never more than a few minutes that any person, or group, has to wait to be ferried over; the river, also, is so narrow at this part that it is easy to call

across it. The boat is guided over by a chain stretched across very taut above the water, and not so high above but that the people in boats must bend to pass beneath, so that it is well for voyagers to know it is there.

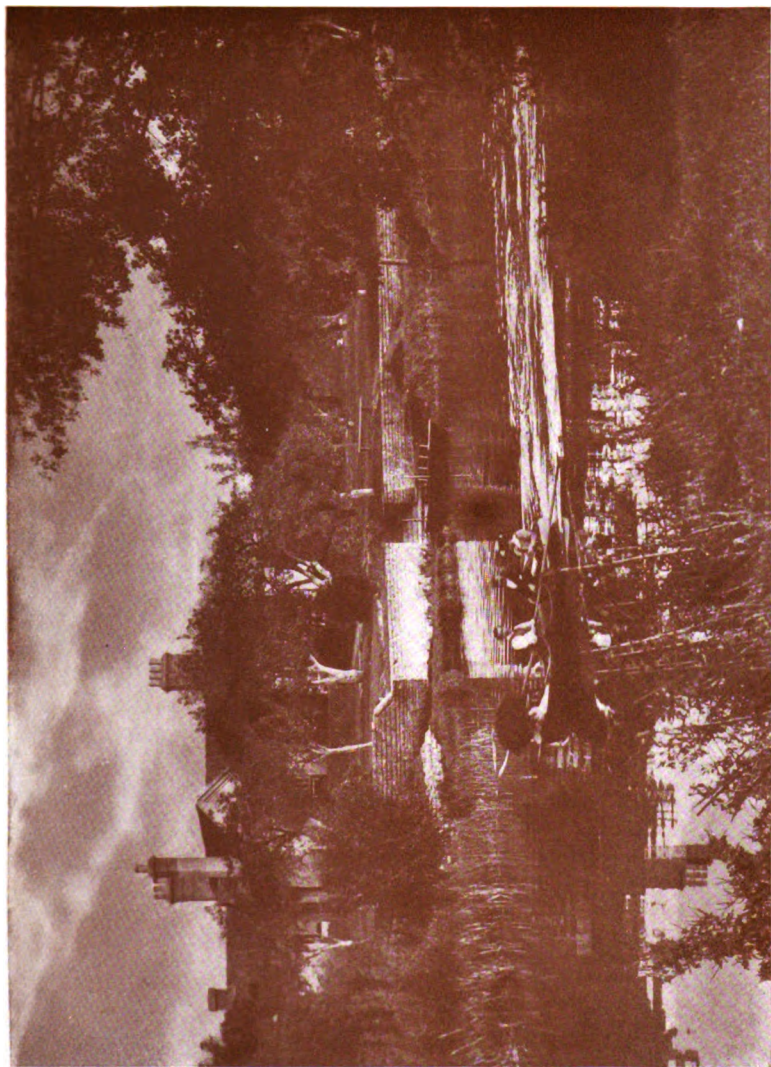
Between the front of The Bridge Inn and the river-side some apple-trees grow, and afford a shade under which tables may be set for refreshment in the open air. There are generally a few people in the bar of the inn or lounging outside, taking refreshment of such sort as so small an inn can afford. Some of these people are *bona fide* passengers by the ferry, who have halted for a legitimate draught, and some have come up or down the river and put in here to slake their thirst, and some have come to the public-house to have a drink and a gossip, without any pretence of coming or going for any other purpose at all.

The Bridge Inn has had existence for a long time, though nobody living remembers the bridge which is supposed to have been destroyed in the civil wars, and very many people of various sorts have crossed the ferry, or come up here and tasted of one liquor or another, were it tea, or beer, or whiskey, or ginger-beer, which seem to be representative of modern drinks, or that which it was the fashion to drink of old time.

From "The Bridge" a lane leads up to the village of Offenham, which is found to consist of a little straggling street or two of cottages, more or less detached, with by-lanes leading to farms; and its church with a square tower prominently placed. It is a peaceful place, occupying an open airy position with plenty of space about it, and removed a little way from the

banks of the river. Its antiquity is indicated by its name, Offenham being the home-place of Offa. There were several Offas in Saxon times. There was, for instance, that famous king of Mercia who is said to have been born blind, dumb, and a cripple, but to have been cured by miracle of all these deficiencies, and to have earned for himself the title of "Offa the Terrible." He it was who made "Offa's Dyke," and the law that every Welshman who was found on the English side of this dyke should have his hand cut off. But the Offa of Offenham was a much milder character. He was Offa, King of Essex, or the East Angles, who, with his great friend, Kendred, King of Mercia, so richly endowed Evesham Abbey, and afterwards went to Rome and became a monk. He gave Offenham to the Abbey, and the abbots built a large residence here, to which they were able to retire at will. This house was here in the time of Henry VIII. and both house and land, being part of the Abbey property, were taken from Abbot Lichfield and conveyed to Sir Philip Hoby, and, since then, the land has known many owners, whilst the house has entirely disappeared.

Coming back to Offenham Ferry, after looking at the village, we descend the steps that lead from the inn to the water's edge, and, as we row away, hear the bells of the church of Offenham ringing a merry peal — a wedding has taken place there. At the inn itself a somewhat jovial party are toasting each other, and a verse of an old song, which one of them commences to sing, follows the retreating boat with lessening distinctness as the distance from the inn is increased.



The Bridge Inn—Offenham Ferry.

Offenham, Worcestershire.

AT THE BRIDGE INN AT OFFENHAM FERRY

My friends, I would try your approval to win
With advice, if you'll give me the warrant:
As of human kind treat all conditions of men,
And give credit for virtues apparent.
But though many affect a superior coat,
You will take their pretence with a query,
And reflect we all came in the same ferry-boat
To the Bridge Inn at Offenham Ferry.

And when some shady mendicant looks in your face,
And lays claim to be known as your brother,
Do not question the point, for the whole human race
Has this same old brown earth for its mother;
And, although the relationship seems more remote,
And you're not gratified — or not very,
Recollect we all cross in the same ferry-boat
From the Bridge Inn at Offenham Ferry.

All is well, if at evening, perchance, we can say
"We have spent a good day up the river,"
And have sterling coin ready our reckoning to pay,
Though it may not amount to a fiver.
Then may each have a friend near to lend him a hand
As he goes down the steps to the wherry,
When our host shall call "Time," and we heed the command,
At the Bridge Inn at Offenham Ferry.

Above Offenham the river makes one or two minor curves, and then a very sharp and sudden bend, where the boat touches bottom, owing to our coxswain trying to get round upon the inside of the curve, as being the nearest way. She requires to be lectured upon the reason why the outer or longer side of the curve of a river is always the deeper water on account of the force of the current tending to carry the water straight on, and so against the further side of the curve; the water, flowing more swiftly upon that longer side, scoops out

the bed of the river, whilst, upon the inner or shorter side of the curve, the water flows sluggishly and deposits suspended matter, so that at every curve there is the deep and the shallow side. The coxswain, feeling that her competence in navigation is being called in question, presently seeks to redeem her character by the nautical cry of "Breakers ahead!" This is when we come to the first obstruction to navigation met with upon the Avon, in the shape of a decayed lock and weir. The lock gates are gone, but the water on the side of the river where the lock used to be, is calm, and appears to be deep enough to float the boat into the old, gateless lock, whilst on the weir side the water is rushing down with considerable current over a number of rough stones of large size. We steer into the lock, a couple of strokes sending the boat straight between the high stone walls. These are cool and moss-grown, and overshadowed with a growth of alder bushes, which are pushing their roots between the stones and helping to dislocate them and further the ruin. Many of the stones of the masonry are already thrown down, and some of them completely obstruct the passage out of the lock at the upper end into the deeper water above. It is easy to step on to the fallen stones and reach the bank from the upper end of the lock, and two of our trio climb up the bank after the empty boat is pulled up over the stones and so past the obstruction. Just near the broken lock, however, is not a good place for the party to get afloat again, as the stream immediately on one side is running very strong, and our third voyager gets into the boat with a view to taking her some way higher

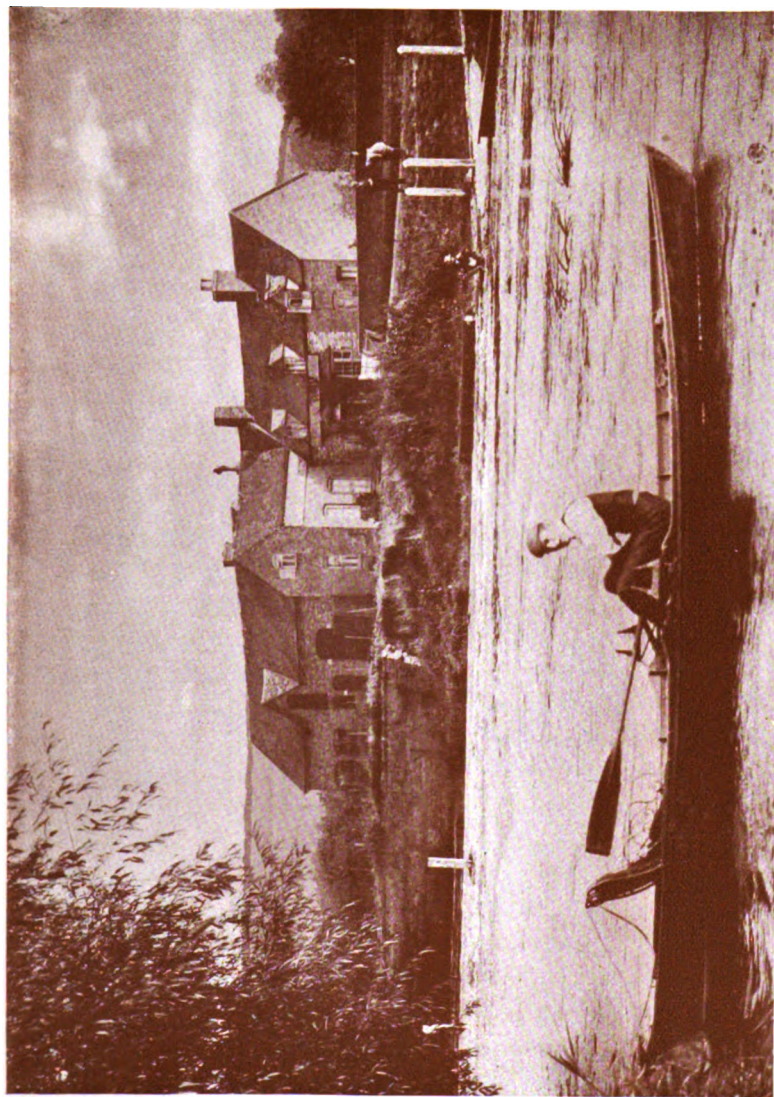
up, where the bank affords a good place for re-embarkation for the others. No sooner is he afloat, however, than the head of the boat is carried round by the current, and she is swept away down the weir broadside on; but two stones, one towards either end, catch her and hold her in midstream in a position in which it seems that if she moves at all she must be carried down the weir, and probably be overturned. The wrecked navigator, however, takes the situation with equanimity. The water is quite shallow and he attaches the boat's painter to one of the sculls above the blade and wades to the opposite bank, pulls the head of the boat up stream and tows her out of the current into calm water, then takes her over for the rest of the party to come aboard.

A few hundred yards ahead some buildings are visible upon the bank of the river. These belong to "The Fish-and-Anchor," and there is a further obstruction there in the shape of a ford. As the ford is approached the party find themselves in shallow water and the keel of the boat grazes the pebbles at the bottom in several places. Just below the ford, the river evidently has an unusual gradient and flows with a swift stream, against which the boat makes little headway, though urged with all the power that can be put into two pair of sculls. The pulling is muscular and manful, until the boat goes hard aground in the rushy shallows below the ford.

We push her off with the boat-hook and she drifts back for some distance, and then, keeping close to the bank on one side, it is found possible to approach some planks that have been placed for landing not far below

the inn known as "The Fish-and-Anchor," and close up to the ford. The river-bottom has here been paved, but the paving is rough and uneven, and seems of little advantage to those who use the ford. Above the ford there is a ferry-boat, and after we have landed we go over by the ferry with our camera to take a picture of the ford from the opposite side. Having viewed the scene from several points of view, we at last decide upon the picture. There is a boat in the foreground and a couple of white guiding-posts above serve to indicate the position of the ford; "The Fish-and-Anchor" shows up in a good position in the background with Littleton Hill behind it, and some people who are fishing for dace in the shallows come out as diminutive figures in the middle distance, serving to show the relative size of things in their locality.

There appears to be nothing to do at "The Fish-and-Anchor" except to eat bread and cheese in its kitchen and watch the fishermen, after many throws of the fly and much play, at last land a dace about the size of a sprat, and perhaps as many as six dace meet their death that afternoon, under the wielding of the two rods employed. The quarry is exceedingly small, but the sporting instinct seems to be equally excited in catching a dace an ounce and a half in weight as in catching a salmon of twenty pounds. There is also the juvenile remembrance of catching sticklebacks with a bent pin to prove that the weight of the haul has little relation to the sport afforded, for the stickleback bears about the same proportion to the dace as the dace does to the salmon, although science has given him the ponderous title of *Gasterosteus spinulosus*.



In the Shallows below the Ford.
"The Fish and Anchor", Littleton, Worcestershire.

We walk from "The Fish-and-Anchor" leisurely to Littleton, or the Littletons — for there are three portions, bearing the names of North, South, and Middle Littleton respectively. It takes us a couple of hours or so to do it. We go up over the corner of the Hill which gives us a good view of the river valley, with Harvington on the other side recognised by its steepled church. The most remarkable sights in the Littletons are found to be the several fine old stone-built farmsteads, typical homes of the yeomen of this middle England — good, hardy, Saxons of Mercia. What if times are at a low ebb with them, and only a bare living is to be got out of either ploughing or grazing? They will grumble, but go through it, and rear families of children to keep the breed going in this and other lands. At Middle Littleton is another of those gigantic church barns, built by monks of old to store the tithes and charitable gifts in kind which kept the monasteries so well supplied.

Near South Littleton, some years ago, the burial place of a large number of Saxon warriors was discovered. The skeletons showed that the bodies had been buried with care and religious ceremony. Under the head of each had been placed his shield, the metal bosses of which remained, and by his side his spear, and in his hand a little cup of wood or clay. He was thus properly equipped to begin a new existence in the hereafter in which he had faith.

After some amount of hauling we succeed in getting our boat over the ford at "The Fish-and-Anchor." Above the ford the banks of the river are rather high, especially near the inn, and the ferry-boat there is

approached by a curious little flight of steps. Hardly more than half a mile of shallow water separates "The Fish-and-Anchor" from Harvington Mill. This mill is a small red-brick building, now out of use and in decay, and, so far as its own appearance goes, is best seen at the distance which lends enchantment; but the surroundings of the mill are wild and fine, an effect from which the ruinous condition of the mill does not detract. We land upon an island, which the river makes here, the surface of the island being covered with an orchard and paddock. Between the orchard and the paddock used to be a water-way, for there is the lock — or what remains of it — showing signs of a lengthened neglect, the gates and body of the lock being hopelessly blocked by a deposit of mud. There is a pleasing prospect from the further end of the orchard, where the dam of the river remains intact and forms a fine weir, holding up the water above in a broad, deep stretch. Above the weir on one side is the well-placed mill-farm and its accompanying cottages, and on the greensward in front of the farm there is a large drove of Aylesbury ducks, whose plumage is matched by the white line of foaming water at the foot of the weir. There are fishermen about, and the whole scene is of decidedly aquatic character and has the pleasing, pretty effect that such a mixture of land and water always possesses.

At the side of the weir there are rollers up an incline, with a tipper at the top for getting boats over the dam, and we wonder why the same simple device is not provided at every place upon the Avon where an obstruction to the navigation of the river by small boats exists.



In the Meadow by the Mill.

Cleeve Prior, Worcestershire.

Having by this handy means got our boat into the upper water, we stroll up the lane to Harvington village, the distance being about a mile. We pass on the way a hopfield, where the green and vigorous plants have reached the top of the lines placed by the farmer for the accommodation of their twining stems and are forming long arbour-like avenues across the field.

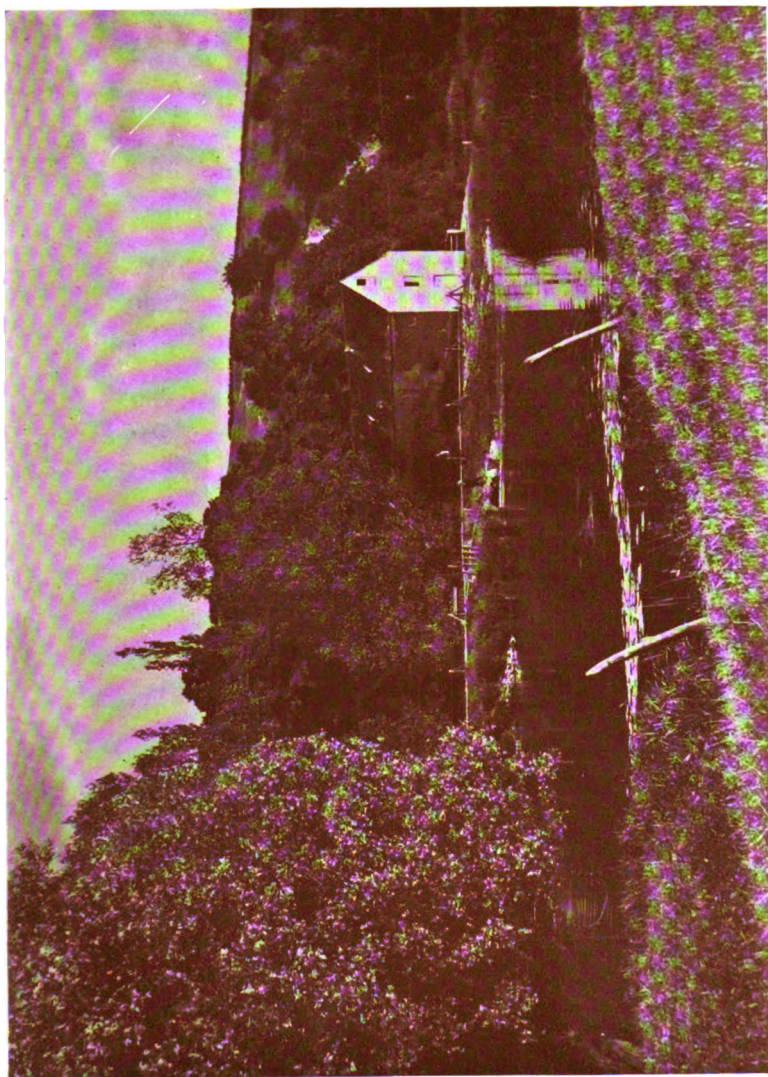
We discuss the uses and active principles of the hop, speaking of its tonic, and sedative, and antiseptic properties, which cause it to be put into beer to prevent it quickly turning sour, and to give it that really disagreeable bitterness, which people grow by custom to relish. The conversation easily drifts from hops to beer, and from beer to alcoholic drinks generally, and their drug effect upon the body. Nor can we stop at alcoholics, but must take note also of those other drugs in daily use — tea, coffee, and tobacco; and the question is, what is the gross effect of all this drugging upon the human race? Is the harm done by these stimulants and sedatives outbalanced by the good? How far has genius been assisted by them — how far have the everyday labours of life been rendered easier by their use, and the greater comfort of the body ensured?

These questions provide us with conversation as we walk up past the hop-field to Harvington Village. Arrived there, we change the subject of comment to the old houses we find in the village, especially that group of dwellings in black and white which lines the road where it turns down in the Evesham direction, including a particularly attractive old farm-house high up on the roadside bank.

We walk back then, down the lane to the Mill-farm and our boat and, proceeding onward, find a remarkably fine piece of water above Harvington Mill. The river approaches the hill that is named after the village of Cleeve Prior, which lies behind it, until hill and river run along close together. The hillside, rising near the edge of the water, is at first bare of trees, and a flock of sheep is seen grazing upon its grassy side; higher up it is partly covered with woods. There are bushes of briar, thorn, and alder on the other bank, with flat meadows, and in one of these a small herd of milking cows stand or lie placidly chewing the cud, and waiting the advent of milking-time.

Cleeve Mill is now in sight in front, its grey side apparently jutting out into the course of the stream. All these old mills were of vital importance once upon a time, and had to be assisted in the task of grinding the corn of the country by the wind-mills that stood upon every prominent hill throughout the land. It was when steam-power was introduced that all the wind-mills, and half the water-mills, fell into disuse and decay, and that is the reason why the old mill of Cleeve Prior so often stands silent and desolate in its beautiful surroundings, though it has not been allowed to fall entirely to ruin, like Harvington Mill.

The water near Cleeve Mill spreads itself out broadly and goes meandering into a wilderness of strongly grown rushes and flags, loosestrife and willow-herb, with bushes and trees in every direction, some of the trees on the neighbouring bank being of large size. The mill and the weir are situated in the middle of this profuse growth. There are always people about —



The Mill and the Hill.

Cleeve Prior.

some in boats and some fishing — and there is a boat-house with boats to be let on hire, and a place where refreshments may be obtained, for Cleeve Mill is, perhaps, the finest place for boating upon the Avon. The river is here crossed by a plank foot-way to serve the convenience of people living in the villages of Cleeve Prior and Salford, which stand upon opposite sides of the Avon, either village about a mile from the banks of the river in the respective counties of Worcestershire and Warwickshire.

BOAT AHOY !

" Boat ahoy ! There are shallows ahead,
And rocks that are hidden from sight;
No passage this way can be made."

" All's well ! for I go
By a fairway I know,
And shall harbour my boat ere the night."

" Boat ahoy ! There are dangers anear—
Thou art like to be wrecked in this part !
Say by what bearings dost steer? "

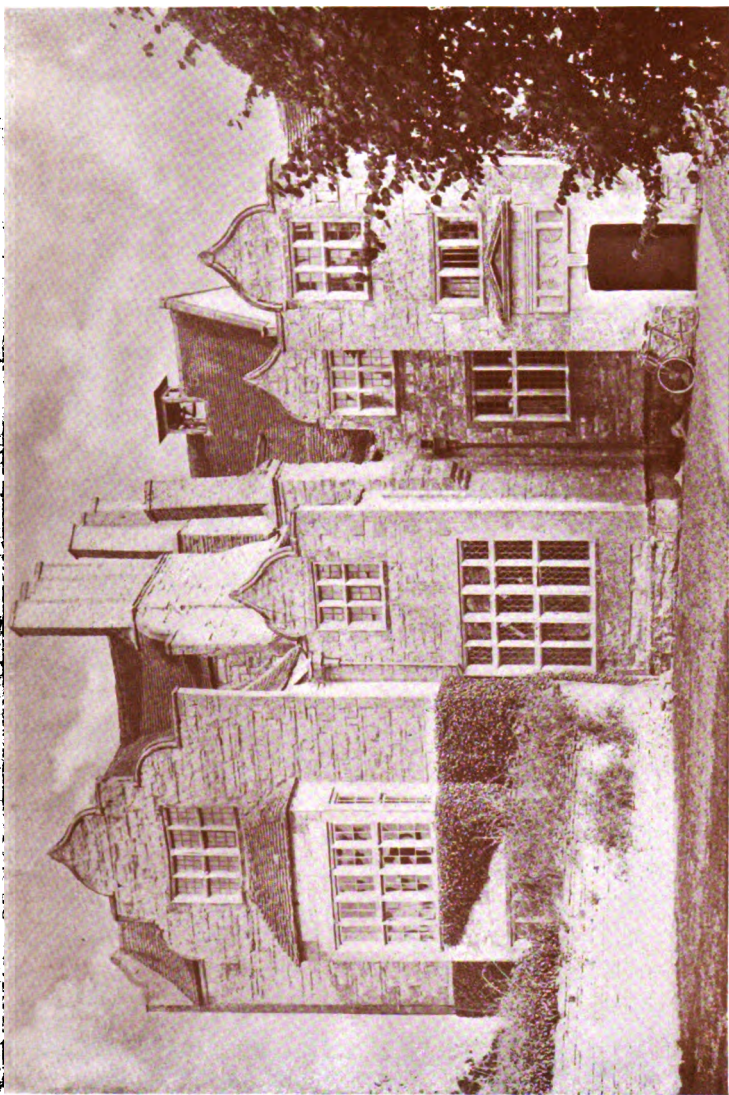
" All's well ! for I spy
The flash-light of Love's eye,
And I steer my heart home to his heart."

CHAPTER XIII

SALFORD, CLEEVE PRIOR, AND THE MARL CLIFF

THERE are Salford Priors and Abbot's Salford, two little villages three quarters of a mile apart. The names of both speak of Catholic church-dignitaries and are accounted for by the fact that one was held by the Abbot of Evesham and the other by the Prior of Kenilworth. Abbot's Salford belonged to the Abbey of Evesham from Ecgwin's days straight on to the time of the dissolution, but Salford Priors knew several changes of ownership. Thus, in the time of Edward the Confessor it was held by Godeva, or Godiva, wife of Leofric, Earl of Coventry — that very Godiva who, begging her lord to reduce the heavy taxes under which the people of Coventry groaned, and vowing that she herself would do anything for the good of the people, was challenged by the rude old Earl to ride naked through the streets, as proof of the genuineness of her desire. And so, as all the world knows, she did, "clothed on with chastity," and won freedom for the people and everlasting renown for herself. The honourable keeping of his promise is saving, to some extent, of the character of Leofric, as is also the lettering of the charter which he holds in his hand, where he stands beside Godiva in a coloured window in Trinity Church, Coventry:

" I Leofric for the love of thee
Doe make Coventry tol-free."



Salford Hall.

Salford, Warwickshire.

Salford Priors came to be owned by more ordinary people in after days. It came into the hands of King James I., for instance, who utilized it as security for some of his debts, and the property afterwards went by purchase into the family of Clarke, and two or three generations of that name lie buried in the church here.

Abbot's Salford, when it fell into the hands of Henry VIII. as part of the property of Evesham Abbey, consisted of thirteen farms and fourteen cottages, and was sold to Sir Philip Hoby for £179. 13. 4. It has been sold several times since then, but never again at so low a price. The suppression of the monasteries brought a large amount of land into the market and the opportunity at that time afforded to the person who possessed a little cash and the ambition to become a landed proprietor will probably never recur.

Salford Hall is the name of the old Elizabethan house at Abbot's Salford, though some call it "The Nunnery" on account of its having been for a time the home of a Catholic Sisterhood. It is not now maintained as the important country residence it must for long have been. Its surrounding gardens have fallen out of keeping and its numerous rooms stand vacant, only a small part of the house being occupied by a farmer and agent of the owner, and he sometimes receives boarders who desire to spend the summer vacation in a quiet country place near the river. But, ancient and somewhat neglected as the house is, it maintains a dignified appearance, and definite superior style, looking as if it held dominion by proper right over the village and neighbouring lands. Grey, sombre, almost ghostly, it stands distinct and different from any

building for a long way round, with the angles of its numerous gables moulded in fine style, and containing latticed windows; the chimney-stacks tall, rising several together, and set corner to corner, some of them getting out of perpendicular owing to such touch-and-no-more support from their neighbours. It is an experience to go through the rambling apartments of its interior; through the hall, with its stone floor and great open hearth, into the chapel beyond with its high oriel window, and into the labyrinthine passages upstairs, which lead to chambers lighted by heavily-mullioned windows, and leading one out of the other in unpractical confusion. The builder of the house, with a view to a contingency that was more likely to arise three hundred years ago than in these days, provided the house with a hiding-place. It is an unsuspecting cupboard, whose false back can be made to disclose a space in which a man might hide.

This hiding-place stimulates the imagination to call up a vision of some romantic incident in the Civil War. The owner of the house has eluded General Massey's men and has arrived home in the evening, but there wants not in the village one whose sympathies are with the other side, and he promptly bears the information to the captain of a troop of the enemy who happen to have quartered themselves upon mine host of "The Falcon" at Bidford, and the captain determines at once to come in the night and catch the Squire, who is a notorious reviler of the Puritans. So, about midnight, there is a tramp of cavalry in the courtyard without, and an echoing knock upon the great front door from the butt of a flint-lock causes everyone

in the house to start from sleep in alarm, and the master, having ascertained the cause of the hubbub, and finding the house closely surrounded, hurries away to the hiding-chamber. When the knock has been two or three times repeated, each time with increased vehemence, a casement is opened above and the sweet, tremulous voice of a woman is heard asking, "What means this disturbance of the rest of defenceless women?"

The question is met by a stentorian demand for the surrender of Sir Simon.

Then follows a parley in duet, in which the lady endeavours to cover her father by a round untruth — always to be expected in a lady who is guarding her near male relation. She says her father is away with the king, in a service which should commend itself to every true and worthy gentleman; and she upbraids the captain of Cromwell's Horse for his want of chivalry as well as his want of loyalty to his king. But neither by chiding nor prayer can she move the inexorable iron-hard Roundhead. The door must be opened and he must search the house. And so, at last, the great door is opened and the captain finds himself confronted by the maiden, who presents a lovely but unconventional appearance through having risen in haste from her bed. As he will not believe her she is prepared to show him every apartment in the house.

The captain goes with the lady, followed at a respectful distance by half-a-dozen of his troopers, some of them bearing torches. They march through all this maze of chambers, and the red glare of the torches falls upon the faces of the servants and other inmates of the house, where they stand in groups all shivering with

cold and dread, but they do not see Sir Simon; in fact, the captain sees little else besides the lady, for whom, by this time, he has conceived an intense admiration, thinking that, as she can defend a father so well, she is likely to be capable of defending a husband no worse.

The old hiding-place, as we stand near it whispers such a tale to us, and we seem to hear the sound of the horses' hoofs on the stones of the yard, and the champ-ing of their bits; and to feel the cold draught of air rushing into the house through the open door; and to see the retreating figures of the captain and the lady followed by the troopers tramping heavily over the resounding board floors. Did not one of the rascals, as he went past us, in contrast to the severe and frowning countenances of his five comrades, wear a broad grin under his iron helmet, which bespoke more plainly than words his appreciation of the comic element in the affair, and the futility of the search when made in such wise, the would-be captor of Sir Simon being himself led captive by Sir Simon's daughter?

Salford is handy for Cleeve Mill and is a quiet place to stay for fishing and boating, and, in these respects, the village of Cleeve Prior, on the opposite side of the river, is just as convenient. From Salford Hall you quickly get to the river at the mill, by going down a green lane and across a couple of fields, and may there take a boat as desired.

We come down to Cleeve Mill from Salford upon a day and cross the river by the foot-bridge, for a visit to Cleeve Prior. To get there we have to ascend the wooded hill of Cleeve, which, at this point, forms a leafy background to the scene at the mill. This hill

is very steep and to drag up a wagon heavily loaded with flour must be hard work for the horses, and to descend with a load of grain must be almost as difficult, but both feats have doubtless been accomplished many thousands of times.

This Worcestershire village of Cleeve Prior was a place of some note in far-off Roman times. The Romans found here a good hard stone worth quarrying, and also a clay suitable for pottery, and started a manufactory of common ware, fragments of which remain to tell the tale of the Roman occupation and industry. When at last the great world-empire began to totter towards its fall, and the legions were withdrawn from Britain, they left behind the rich legacy of knowledge that pertained to their civilization and such indications of it as these bits of broken pottery. At Cleeve Prior they left something else — by an odd chance or accident, as one supposes, because it is a commodity which the possessor invariably endeavours to take away with him when he has no thought of return; namely, money. It was treasure-trove, and the finder was a cottager of Cleeve in the days of good Queen Victoria. It was his duty according to law to have handed it over for the use of his sovereign, since the Crown, with great beneficence, assumes the character of legal owner in place of those who have buried their money and said nothing about it. Our villager, however, thought it better to dispose privily and to his own advantage of the curious old Roman coins he had found, and is said to have received no less than £700 in English money in exchange for them, some of them being of gold. As he also seems to have

escaped prosecution and punishment for the misdemeanour committed, he must be deemed a favourite of Dame Fortune, who does not make such clear distinction between the good and the wicked as might be expected of her.

Whatever Cleeve Prior may have been in the days of the Romans, it is but a remote, primitive, sleepy village at the present time: some of its stone cottages are centuries old, and its inn, "The King's Arms," with its old paved yard, gives the impression of having known a greater use than any to which it is now put. The village has a deserted air, as if left behind in mistake by passing time, but it is decidedly an artist's village. Near the church is a small green, surrounded by old cottages and a stone-built malt-house, and with a large hollow tree upon it, the decay of which is in keeping with that general aspect of going backward by which the village is characterised. A healthy sycamore tree, and a yew trimmed to represent a peacock with spread tail assist in making this a distinguished corner. There is one fine old house — the manor house — which strikes us as being quite a poetic place. It is not a large house, but a typical, old-style English home. The yew hedges by the sides of the path leading to the grand old Jacobean doorway, are trimmed into arcades of living piers and arches. The door itself is heavily armed with iron cross-bars, and has a peep-hole through which all who knock can be critically surveyed before the door is opened. This door opens into a beautiful square hall, paved with diamond-shaped stones and pannelled with wood. Round the house is an old garden, and a pair of real



"The King's Arms."

Cleeve Prior.

peafowl stalk the premises, or fly up on to the ridge of the adjoining granary, uttering occasionally their extremely discordant cry. Fine feathers make fine birds, but do not give them a musical voice, and we suppose this to be another instance of compensation. It would not be fair for one bird to have all the good qualities and, as a matter of fact, it never has. The farm buildings belonging to the manor are as old and interesting as the house itself.

The place seems to possess many possibilities of a past interest of a sentimental kind. We picture the square, walled-in garden tenanted by pretty ladies in high-waisted, frilled frocks, and by men in brightly-coloured coats, gaily-flowered waistcoats and cravats, knee-breeches and periwigs. The dream awakens a sigh for those olden times, and it is oh, for the brave men and lovely women who have passed away! What a pity that they can be known no more! And yet, although dress, modes of speech, and manners change, the essential characteristics of humanity are the same, and the old race remains, with, we hope, as great potentialities as it ever possessed. Life was more local in the olden times, and, being so much limited to the old home, was more blissful, as we suppose. Perhaps later there may be a return to the greater peace that pertains to the simpler modes of life, though rising humanity is its own mentor, and will act and live according to the energy and enterprise that is within it. The decaying village and the over-full town have been the sign of later times. What next — who can tell?

The hill, called Cleeve Hill, that runs parallel to the

Avon from near "The Fish and Anchor" to Cleeve Mill, is continued on past Cleeve Prior, and forms, for some distance, a steep cliff that rises from close to the river and has a face of grey marl, which, however, is more or less covered by a growth of trees and bushes. This is known as the Marl Cliff, or Marl Cliff Hill, and at its extreme end is situated the small village of Marlcliff, and a mile beyond, in the valley, is the village-town of Bidford.

There is an old Roman road running the whole length of the hill and overlooking the river and valley. The made surface of the road is sunken, overgrown and lost to view, and there now remains little more than a green track or footway, but the paving would be revealed by a slight removal of the surface soil. The Roman roads were as great feats of engineering for that age as our own railways are for this, being carried straight from point to point, and their surfaces paved with worked stones throughout their length. They were an important factor in the occupation and government of the country by the Romans, being necessary for rapid intercommunication, as strategic railways are nowadays. The Roman road of which we are speaking was but a minor branch road; it ran into the main Icknield Street just beyond the Marl Cliff.

On the hill above Cleeve Mill, by the side of the Roman road, is a tumulus of uncertain origin. Some say it is the burial place of soldiers who fell at the battle of Evesham, though the distance from Evesham is rather long for such a proposition to be accepted, and the tumulus is on the wrong side of the river. On the top of the mound stands a carved monolith, said to be



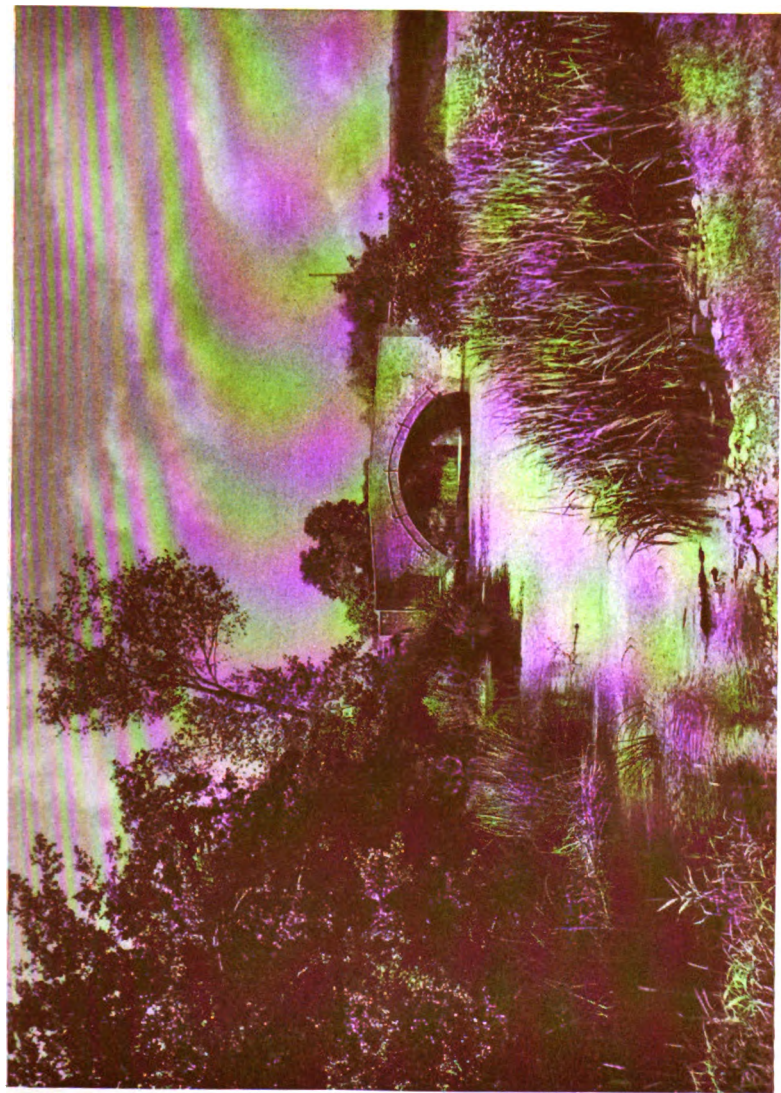
View of Salford from the Marl Cliff.
The Marl Cliff, Warwickshire.

the plinth of a cross that once stood here. But the actual and certain origin of the place seems to have fallen out of tradition. Perhaps information upon the point might be obtained by opening the ground.

The track along the top of the Marl Cliff is a favourite walk for anyone staying at Cleeve Prior, Salford, or Bidford, for along here some fine views of the Avon and its valley are obtained. Especially is this so at the highest point of the Cliff. The river coming down from Bidford strikes the cliff at this point and turns along under the hill, at almost an exact right angle to its previous course. From the hill-top above the angle, we look down a long stretch of water on the upper side and see Bidford plainly at the end of it; and the lower line of water similarly ends in Salford Priors, the church of which village is nearly in a line with the river, and shows up very plainly, the weather being clear. Down in the valley, on the other side of the water, are flat meadows, which are to-day bathed in sunlight, saving where the shadows of some large clouds are trailed across the grass, as the clouds themselves float under the clear blue of the sky, across the valley. Numerous cattle are in the meads, feeding upon the luscious aftermath, and on the long stretches of placid, shining water every craft is clearly visible and may be followed for a long way upon its course. The small steam launch that takes people upon a trip from Bidford down to Cleeve Mill, is heard to sound her warning siren to call up her passengers before she leaves the mill, and when she has started we watch her, from where we stand upon the top of the Marl Cliff, through the greater part of her homeward voyage. Her capacity

is too limited for the number of her passengers and she tows a well-filled boat behind her.

It is Saturday afternoon at Cleeve Mill and this little steamboat has been busy making voyages to and from the mill, because, in summer-time, Bidford is a cheap week-end holiday resort for people from Birmingham and elsewhere, and one of the chief things to do at Bidford is to go down the river to Cleeve Mill. Some do it in rowing-boats, and some attempt to sail, though the sailing generally ends in rowing, for the wind rarely serves for both going and returning, and to tack upon a river that is nowhere more than five-and-twenty yards or so wide is a tiresome business. Many go by the steam launch and so avoid all personal trouble. This afternoon Cleeve Mill is as a hive swarming with human bees. Small parties walk up to Cleeve Prior, or Salford, or wander along the meadow paths, or linger by the river-side, or upon the planks of the footbridge. Some, taking boats at the mill, go down to Harvington and back again, being desirous of seeing more of the river, and others are content to rest with their boats drawn up in some shady place or secluded nook. There is some call for refreshments which, of a light kind, are supplied in the booth that stands conveniently near upon the bank opposite the mill. The attraction to all these visitors from the manufacturing town, apart from their own society, can be nothing more than Nature, however, who is here to be looked at dressed in a green garb. From time to time, the launch blows her siren and takes a party back to Bidford, and returns with a fresh batch of passengers, until dusk, when the last return.



The Tributary.

The River Arrow near Salford.

EVENING SONG ON THE AVON

Joining in song ere this summer day dies,
Friends, let our praises and benisons rise;
Yonder light clouds that so rosy appear,
Speak the day's end and tell evening is here.
Homeward we row whilst the sunset is burning,
Seeking sweet rest; may the sun's bright returning
Bring back the joys that to daylight belong:
Murmur, sweet Avon, to help in this song.

Sweet it was, Avon, to rest in the shade,
Where thy green willows a cool arbour made;
Take our repast by thy flower-flecked shore;
Wander together thy bright meadows o'er.
Now as the nightfall each fair scene effaces,
Memory still lingers in those pleasant places.
Daylight is brief; may remembrance be long:
Murmur, sweet Avon, to help in this song.

Where thy calm bosom is stirred by the oar.
Ringed ripples surge and extend to the shore;
Marked in thy mutable waters alone,
Where is the trace of us when we are gone?
Avon, in thee we leave no mark behind us;
None, by the faults of our going, shall find us;
So be it through life as we journey along:
Murmur, sweet Avon, to help in this song.

CHAPTER XIV

TO BIDFORD ON A SATURDAY EVENING

THE steep, grassy sides of Cleeve Hill afford a delightful place for scrambling and sitting. No doubt the land here is privately owned and in the lawful occupation of the owner or another person, as is the case with all the land of Avonside; but there appears to be a tacit understanding that, so long as people behave themselves well and do no material damage, their liberty to walk in the fields adjoining the river will not be challenged, nor the enjoyment they get be interfered with. It would be an ungracious thing for a riparian occupier to make any interference, notwithstanding that the people sometimes pick sticks and light fires to boil their kettles and, in doing so, perhaps burn the grass from a very small patch of land; and thoughtless people sometimes tread down the mowing-grass, which is reprehensible.

After mixing for some hours with the holiday folk at Cleeve Mill, we order out our boat and again take to the water. The boat must be put over the dam, and there are no rollers here to facilitate this, but the boat must be carried up a steep, rough surface and tipped over the plank foot-bridge, into the water on the other side. Help, however, is always at hand to assist in putting your boat into the upper water.

The river Arrow, a chief tributary, comes down by



Evening on the Avon.

Cleeve Prior.

the town of Alcester, Ragley Park, and the villages of Wixford, Broom, and Salford, to join the Avon. The junction is by two mouths, one of which forms a bit of backwater near Cleeve Mill, and the other is half a mile higher up, and into this mouth you may pull your boat and, ascending the tortuous tributary for some hundreds of yards, find shady spots in which to lie concealed from the observation of the trippers on the Avon. Bordering the Arrow near the Avon are a number of very old willows with trunks split down to the ground, and yet they stand in a fine group by the river side. From the main mouth of the river Arrow the ascent of the Avon is direct to the Marl Cliff, which presents a charming appearance from the river, its rugged, broken face being finely clothed with trees and undergrowth. In places the cliff is quite precipitous. There is a good broad, clear, deep piece of water all along here to the point of the angle in the river, and above this through the next mile that brings us by the flat meadow-land into view of Bidford Bridge. The sight of some prolific growths of rushes along here reminds us that Shakespeare was fond of rushes and mentions them in no fewer than twelve of his plays. His familiarity with the Avon will account for this, as it is a very rushy river. Bidford Bridge is one of the old style, with low arches of varying size and shape, the passage way over it being narrow as was the original Roman road, known as Icknield Street or, locally, as Buckle Street, which crossed the river here, going in the direction of the town of Alcester that lies four or five miles to the North.

Alcester appears to have been a town famous for

the manufacture of articles of iron in ancient times and Birmingham the present centre of the same industry, lies within twenty-five miles of it. In connection with Alcester, mention has once more to be made of that remarkable man, Ecgwin, Bishop of Worcester and Abbot of Evesham. He came to Alcester to preach the Gospel of Christianity to the heathen Saxons, but the smiths of Alcester, whose sensibilities were hard as the chilled iron implements they produced, turned a deaf ear to his teaching and, when he became more importunate, drowned his voice with the clang of their hammers upon the anvils. At length, as the legend affirms, the Bishop turned away and cursed them, and they were transformed into beasts.

Bidford Bridge is very old — how old is uncertain. Probably the Romans at first made shift with a ford here, as the name of Bidford implies, but as there were several places in the near neighbourhood of considerable importance — such, for instance, as Cleeve Prior and Alcester, there is a likelihood of a bridge having been provided at an early date. The bridge which existed here in 1449 was out of repair, which was such an inconvenience that the Bishop of Worcester, Bishop Carpenter, offered a year's indulgence to all those who should assist in repairing it. Again, in 1482, it appears to have undergone partial rebuilding by the monks of Alcester, and the present appearance of the bridge may be taken to coincide with its appearance as they left it.

We have tarried so long at Cleeve Mill that it is near the close of day when we leave it to row up to Bidford. It is a calm summer evening, with the sun going down in a glory of red and gold, and the little fleecy clouds

in the higher heaven all tinted to a crimson flush. Looking backward as we row, we think of the days that are passing, and of our hours of enjoyment spent upon the river. How ephemeral are our joys, even as the rings made in the water by the dip of our oar-blades! The recurrence of the sunset will soon add our own time to that past to which so much of our history of the Avon refers. There are several boats upon the river besides our own, for the last of the pleasure-seeking parties are returning to Bidford from Cleeve Mill. They, for the present at least, are very alive. From the closely-packed whale-boat that is being towed by the little steamer arises a scream, followed by a peal of loud laughter and much chatter. That is very human, but not out of harmony with the still trees, the verdant banks, and the sunset sky.

So we come to Bidford on a Saturday evening, landing just below the old bridge where there is a low bar with sluices stretched across the river, preventing progress, as if to compel all comers to go ashore to see the sights of the town. It is well, however, not to anticipate too much, notwithstanding that you have read that Bidford was royal property in the time of William the Conqueror, and such an important place then as to have possessed four mills, yielding an annual tax of forty-three shillings and four pence, and that, when King John gave it away with his daughter Joan to Llewellyn, Prince of North Wales, that prince soon afterwards obtained for the town a charter to hold a weekly market, thinking thereby to add something more to the 43s. 4d.—though this last is assumed and not recorded in history.

The main street at Bidford lies upon the Stratford Road, up an incline. It contains the post-office, the doctor's house, the police station, the fried-fish shop, the butchers' shops, and the other shops, including the rival drapers' shops which face each other as adversaries in a duel, their weapons of offence and defence being the surprise advertisements of gigantic sellings-off, which have the effect of drawing customers from one side of the street to the other. There are several public-houses, the chief being "The White Lion," but there are also "The Mason's Arms," "The Pleasure Boat" and "The Fisherman's Rest." There is another institution, whose existence, indicating the public spirit of the local governing council, must have notice. It is the solitary street lamp, which stands ever in readiness, but appears never to be lit. Yet it would be rash for the stranger to say that it has never been brought into use, for it may be a winter lamp, intended for use upon those high occasions when a ball is held in "The White Lion" assembly rooms. With such a blaze of light as emanates from the shops before enumerated, public lighting in the townlet of Bidford is discounted, and when the shops are shut up it is time to be within doors. Moreover, the streets of Bidford do not show such a confusing intricacy as to render it likely that a person would be lost in passing from place to place if sober; and inebriety, which is reported to have occurred here in former times, is said to be discouraged at present and, as a habit, to be dying out. But to make a proper comparison would need an accurate knowledge of former conditions, as well as of those now existing, for mere tradition cannot

be relied upon as evidence, either of comparative sobriety or of anything else. The Falcon Inn, which is said to have been visited by Shakespeare, is now closed as an inn, and this may be helpful in saving the character of "drunken Bidford," judging from the reputation this inn seems to have gained through the long period of several centuries during which its doors were open to the too thirsty public. The house still stands in its accustomed place, its massive walls rearing themselves in imposing uprightness, as if indignantly denying a scandalous accusation of ill-behaviour.

Immediately round the corner at "The White Lion" is the bridge, and this is a lively corner on a Saturday night, as it is the congregating place of the week-end holiday-makers, who swarm upon the bridge and sit upon the parapet or adjoining wall and block the roadway. In fact, here goes on a *conversazione al fresco*; and never was better court paid to ladies by men than that paid here, either upon the bridge, or in romantic promenades in the moonlight (or the starlight, failing the moon), along the Roman road that runs from the bridge foot away into the country, or up the Stratford Road, or the Evesham Road, or down by the river side, and across the meadows to Barton or Marlcliff.

Opposite "The Lion" there is a musical entertainment by a troupe of professional minstrels in progress, jolly troubadours with banjo and mandolin to accompany their songs, and here the crowd is thickest though many are content to listen at the distance of sheltering recesses formed above the jutting piers of the bridge, where several can stand together and view the stars, either in the heavens above or as reflected

in the river, and be out of the way of the moving throng that is passing to and fro. At every fine week-end during the summer there is a similar gathering and the accommodation for lodgings at Bidford is usually much strained.

"The White Lion" is crowded with people in every department both up and down stairs; you cannot move anywhere without rubbing shoulders with them. Both here and at the "Masons' Arms" opposite, discussions and conversations are being carried on with vivacity, and persons from the great needle-manufacturing town of Redditch, and from Birmingham and elsewhere, are making hearty recognitions of each other, with inquiries as to how things go in the cycle trade, or the enamelled-iron trade, or in whatever trade it is to which the one remembers that the other devotes his time and energy. Sports are freely mentioned — the cricket of the present, and the football of the past or the next season — with approbation or the reverse of the Aston Villa team, or some other well-known or little-known local athletic club. Politics are discussed in a minor key, and it is only at a late hour, and after much refreshment, that a wrangle commences over the merits of the policy of the member of Parliament for West Birmingham.

There is profit and pleasure to be derived by making acquaintance with these sons of Tubal Cain, artisans or artists — call them as you will. Many of them bear the stains of labour upon their hands, but that makes them none the less artists, and their art is effective, their labour of undeniable use; and perhaps so much cannot be said for some who pretend to be

artists and who scorn the artisan, as if it were not better to be a good smith than a painter of poor pictures. Various men they are: men vary in every class. Some of them are of ordinary appearance and some of refined type, artists born and bred. And here they are, from their studios and laboratories that lie beneath that forest of dark, tall chimneys we remember in the great, grimy metropolis of hardware manufactures and its neighbourhood — here for their week-end outing, for change and refreshment of every sense in the green land of Avon.

There is much singing at Bidford on a Saturday night, both out of doors and within. At "The Lion", the piano is kept rattling and a number of voices, from time to time, join in a tumultuous chorus. At "The Fisherman's Rest" a basso profundo sings solos in a grand style, varying from pianissimo to a double forte that is sufficient to make the welkin ring if there be any ring in it. Peeping past the half-drawn blind, we not only hear his songs very perfectly whilst standing in the street, but also have a good view of his facial expression as he sings, and find it quite professional. From other houses similar strains come forth, and so, at all events amongst the visitors, at Bidford life goes past with a laugh and a song. There is a great good-fellowship displayed between friends and strangers; such a generous offering to *incogniti* of cigars and cigarettes; such a number of invitations to drink, that your belief in the benevolence of your kind becomes greatly exalted. The ladies are friendly and condescending; the men gallant, polite, and amusing; everybody is lively and happy.

Closing time comes at length, however, for the public-houses of Bidford, and, the shop lights being put out, the main street grows very dark. The singing at "The Lion" and other places comes to an end and the banjo and mandolin have twanged their accompaniment to the last serenade of the singers in the street.

Now that nearly everybody has retired, the night seems a very good one for serenading, for the stars shine brightly in the deep blue, cloudless sky. It is a night in August, that time of year when the summer sun has had time to produce its full effect upon the earth, which now glows warm with golden corn and ripening berry mingled with the later blossoms. The romantic bridge, hundreds of years old, stands solid and still with the dark Avon flowing under. The backs of the houses abutting on the river bank, and the church beyond, show in their elevated position dimly above the rippling water. Silence has succeeded the noise of the crowd of holiday-makers; all are now gone, except one couple who whisper together upon the bridge.

SERENADE FOR THE RIVER

A thousand stars look down upon me here;
I see them round your dwelling burning bright;
Oh, star of stars, among those stars appear,
And they will fade before your greater light.
 Your praise I sing,
 My brighter star,
 And touch the string
 Of my guitar;
 Ah, then ! Ah, then !
To where my boat upon the river lies,
Throw down for guerdon one glance of your eyes.

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Around your window many a blushing rose
Upon night's dewy air distils its scent;
I long for one sweet blossom, but not those;
Their precious attar all in vain is spent.

Your praise I sing,
My rose and star,
And touch the string
Of my guitar;
Ah, then ! Ah, then !

Arise bright star, and this dull night illumine !
Bloom, blushing rose, and shed your sweet perfume !

CHAPTER XV

AT BIDFORD FLOWER SHOW

WHILST we stay at Bidford the annual Flower Show and Sports takes place. A flat meadow near the riverside makes an admirable show-ground and arena for the miscellaneous entertainment. Here yesterday were pitched in readiness several tents or marquees, one or two for the exhibit of flowers, fruits and vegetables, poultry, butter, eggs, needlework, and what not — for the Managing Committee has an eye to industry in general as well as to gardening in particular; but more of the tents that were pitched yesterday are required for refreshments, because eating and drinking are inseparable from the idea of a popular holiday. Travelling vans have also arrived from various quarters, and taken up their respective positions upon the field, with their merry-go-rounds, peep-shows, shooting galleries, and cocoanut shies, besides stalls for the sale of peppermint-rock in huge pink and white sticks, fruit, crockery, and cheap jewellery. The band has also arrived, and its members having taken an exalted seat on a stand down by the river bank, have gone through a preliminary tootle-tootle, and are now keeping time to the baton of their conductor.

Extending from the neighbourhood of the band towards the opposite side of the meadow, a circle of ground has been roped off for the sports, and hurdles

and other fences erected for the jumping, and thus full preparation has been made for the spectacular equestrian and athletic contest.

In the morning, when things have been placed in order in the show tents, the judges make their round, and the coloured cards betokening their awards of first, second, and third prize, and the solacing commendation which falls short of a prize, are attached to the successful exhibits. Then follows the luncheon presided over by the earl, whose presence stamps the whole affair with the necessary social propriety. Nothing goes without a leader, and all else being equal, the leader is not less effective for being an earl. In the afternoon a crowd of people are gathered upon the ground, and their number being far in excess of the local population proves that many have come from parishes and places outside and beyond Bidford. Such a lot of Willies and Charlies and Teddies, and quite a corresponding number of — ah, well! it would not be polite to individualise the ladies by name, any more than by colour of hair, or size, or trimming of hats. Their names are all very pretty and their trimmings incredible in their variety, and their personal beauty generally is beyond measurement, especially in the eyes of their swains. Some of these swains are about to run in the races, and some to ride in the jumping competitions; and who shall describe the swimming eyes and palpitating pulses of the sweethearts of those who endeavour to win the half-mile race by a rush in the last fifty yards, or who would have won the jumping competition for horsemen but for the stumble of the mare at the biggest fence. Apart from winning

the prize, however, and the pride of receiving it at the hands of the countess, the plucky fellows will get a reward, which, whether it be a congratulation or condolence, is equally grateful, and more than compensates for a bruise on the shoulder or strain of a muscle tendon resulting from the unwonted effort or the fall.

But not half of the sports have been mentioned, for there are swimming races in the river, and performances of morris dancers in Elizabethan costume, on the dry land, or rather on a stage erected for the purpose — an old exercise revived — with such a bowing and scraping and kicking up of heels as is seldom seen in these prosy times. There are appropriate intervals for band-playing, donkey-riding, cocoa-nut shieing and rifle-shooting, round-about rides and swings; also for games for prizes by throwing balls into gaping mouths, or rings on to hooks; and intervals also for refreshments by sweetmeats, or fruit, or nuts from the stalls, or tea in the tent. Who knows not the delight of a ninepenny tea in a flower-show tea-tent has missed a thing which perfumes the memory as lavender does linen. The full price of ninepence insures, or ought to insure, an *ad libitum* supply of rich plum-cake. Our memories are fragrantly affected in that manner, which causes us presently to find our way into the tea-tent at Bidford Flower Show. But the plum-cake is degenerate, in comparison with that we have held for such a long time in remembrance. It is all a matter of age, doubtless; some things improve and mature by age, but flower-show plum-cake requires to be eaten young.

We pass with the throng through the tents where

the flowers are upon exhibit, with fruits and vegetables and the rest. There are flowers in pots and cut flowers; flowers from the garden and the hot-house and from the cottage window, and collections of wild flowers. These last, though simple and unimposing amongst their highly cultivated neighbours, still possess a great attraction for those who know them. Simple, uncultured weeds they may be, but they are very honest and natural.

We read the names on the labels attached to the little vases, in which the wild flowers of one collection have been placed with a care that seems to have commended itself to the judges, and to have placed the exhibit in front of the more numerous, but unnamed, flowers and grasses tied in bunches: "flowering-rush, bedstraw, forget-me-not, woody nightshade, St. John's-wort, arrowhead, bur-reed, meadowsweet, purple-loosestrife or willowstrife, knapweed, yellow vetch, enchanter's nightshade, briony, catmint, wild carrot, chickory, marsh sowthistle, nuphar or candock." They are all flowers of the Avon, but the list might have been much lengthened.

A feature of the show is the competition in floral dinner-table decorations. This is a somewhat new idea, and we greatly admire the pretty exhibits which seem to tell of the development of artistic taste in the home. We look at each arrangement carefully and think the judges must have had a difficulty in deciding their respective merits. The decorations to which first prize is awarded consists of fluorescent glass vases, eight of a size and one larger centre vase. The flowers are of three species only—yellow carna-

tions, blue-grey-green eryngoes, and the feathery, minute-flowered gypsophila. The vases stand on the white tablecloth without any worked centre-piece or drapery, but, between their bases upon the cloth run waving lines of the foliage of the wall-creeper, ampelopsis, with eryngo heads here and there. The second prize is a bright and effective arrangement. It has an embroidered table-centre, upon and about which stand glass vases with silver rims, containing fine pink and white French poppies and gypsophila, and a dozen small vases, an inch and a half high, containing the same flowers and intended no doubt, to be set at the place of each diner. Another, that does not get a prize, is a show in blue and green and silver, consisting of a silver centre bowl and silver vases, united by a drapery of blue muslin tied by pale blue ribbon bows. The vases contain common water-side forget-me-nots and their foliage. That would be suitable for a farewell dinner.

It is rather hot in the show tent, and much pleasanter in the open air, where the band is again playing and all the varying entertainments are in full swing. Many groups of friends repair to the river-side and sit upon the bank, and others, when tired of the flower-show, walk down to the bridge and take boat. The little steamers that ply to Cleeve Mill are to-day exceedingly busy, and many a gallant takes his fair one for a row down to the Marl Cliff, or up as far as the Grange. The fair one, herself, will sometimes take the oars, whilst the gallant steers and contemplates Beauty in a boat.

BEAUTY IN A BOAT

Amorette takes the seat to the rower consigned,
When her Edward's persuasion prevails,
And she bends to the oars like a reed to a wind,
That alternately freshens and fails;
 In each chaste movement made
 All her charms are displayed
With a freedom and grace unconfined.

Her fair, open brow speaks a spirit discreet
And benign as the skies of the South;
And the smiles that betoken a temper as sweet
Play bo-peep at each side of her mouth;
 And her eyes' dancing lights,
 Like a pair of blue sprites,
Challenge heaven's azure depths to compete.

Her cheek is aglow like a fresh damask rose,
And her neck is as ivory white;
Whilst her lips, just apart where her zephyr breath goes,
Red as reddest of corals are quite;
 And abroad on the air
 Floats a mischief of hair
Which the breeze from its 'prisonment blows.

And though Edward is near every feature to note,
He mistakes for a blossom her hand;
And he gathers it as 'twere a lily afloat
On the stream, or a daisy on land;
 Then in her dainty ear,
 Tells his love half in fear,
And finds Beauty is kind in a boat.

Others walk together up the Stratford Road as far as Shakespeare's crab. The crab-tree at the present time is but a young one, being a graft it is said, from the original old Shakespeare's crab. Under the old tree, which was cut down some years ago, it is commonly reported that Mr. William Shakespeare

and some of his boon companions laid them down awhile to sleep, after a carousal at "The Falcon," at Bidford. Well, many things must have come within the experience of Mr. W. S. aforesaid, and such an experience as this is as likely as not to have befallen. It may have been upon that occasion that he dreamt the dream of Bottom and Titania, or of Caliban and Ariel.

After dusk, whilst the shows of one sort or another still go on in the flower-show field, there is another attraction by the river, for the sports are to end in a grand procession of illuminated boats. They prepare themselves somewhere on the river above, where it is hidden in part by bushes, and, after some manoeuvring up and down stream for judgment for the prize, they follow each other in procession down to the bridge. Much decorated and garlanded, with their rowers in costume, and with fair ladies reclining on cushions beneath canopies in the stern, representing nymphs and fairies, and hung all about with multitudinous Chinese lanterns, whose light is reflected in the still, dark water of the river, they present an entrancing spectacle.

Even when the procession of boats is over and the last of the Chinese lanterns has been put out, and the river is again silent and dark, save for the dots of light which represent the reflection of the stars, there is still a throng upon the bridge and a crowd in "The Lion" where another amateur concert is in progress. Here anyone may sing who can sing, to the accompaniment of the pretty lady pianist, who is so clever as to be able to play any accompaniment, or even

invent one or "vamp it" if the written music be not at hand, give her but the key and an inkling of how the air goes.

And thus the young people enjoy themselves at Bidford Flower Show, until it is nearing the time of the return of the excursion trains. There is still the walk to the station, and to get there — ominous fact — it is necessary to pass over Marriage Hill, which unsentimental geological folks say is really Marl Ridge Hill; but these can never have been in the position of one of a couple of sweethearts returning from Bidford Flower Show. By the time he gets to the top of the hill, the gallant must have made his proposal to the fair, because, from the top, it is only a little run down and over the Arrow Bridge, and there you are at the station and the opportunity is past. So, even though he be a geologist, he will probably allow it to be Marriage Hill upon this evening, and get his answer before coming down.

ROWING SONG

Bending our backs as our oars swing together,
Keeping true time from the stroke to the bow,
Fleetly we glide with a pull, halt and feather,
O'er the bright water, and sing as we row.
Brothers, keep time from the stroke to the bow;
Pull, halt and feather, and sing as we row.

White in our wake are the breakers appearing;
Sparkling the spray by our gleaming oars made;
Joined with our voices are sounds sweet of hearing—
Throbbing of rowlock and whishing of blade.
Brothers, sweet sounds by our rowing are made,
Throbbing of rowlock and whishing of blade.

Measures of motion and music are blending;
Rhythm of rowing and rhyme of song;
Harmony, sweetest of handmaids, attending,
Makes labour lighter and never too long.
Brothers, the harmony heard in our song
Makes labour lighter and never too long.

Bright shines the sun, and his rays will avail us
Till the stars peep in yon heaven's high dome;
And when the daylight, fast fading, shall fail us,
We shall come back to our harbour and home.
Brothers, when stars shine in heaven's high dome
Row back our boat to her harbour and home.



View from the Bridge.

Bidford, Warwickshire.

CHAPTER XVI

BY BIDFORD GRANGE TO HAUNTED HILLBOROUGH AND WELFORD

GOOD-BYE to Bidford and we go on up the river, the navigation of which has been assisted by a two or three days' heavy rain that has added a foot of depth to the water, above that which ruled at the end of the previous four weeks' drought.

A mile from Bidford Bridge the hamlet of Barton occupies a damp corner by the river. Some say this is the Barton mentioned by Christopher Sly in the induction play to "Taming of the Shrew" as being the residence of his progenitor, "Old Sly of Barton Heath," but there is a Barton-on-the-Heath not a very great number of miles away, and probably both Bartons were known to Shakespeare. In flood times this neighbourhood suffers badly, and passengers passing from Welford to Barton at those times are obliged to make a wide detour to avoid having to wade through the waters that submerge the road in long stretches and to considerable depths.

Barton consists of a few ancient farm-houses and some cottages. Both it and Marl Cliff village, as well as the village of Broom, are included in the township of Bidford and go to swell the population of that place of merry holiday-making, and so assist in keeping its public-houses open to the statutory hour of eleven

instead of ten P.M. when, but for them, it might be in danger of falling below the one thousand inhabitants required for this privilege.

Some of those merry holiday-makers are upon the river at the present time. There is one boat that looks as if it were carrying more passengers than any license should allow. It gets stuck in some shallow water near Barton, when the youth who is perched near the rudder seems in imminent peril of a ducking. Luck, however, favours the bold — sometimes, and they are but a little way behind our boat upon its arrival at Bidford Grange.

At Bidford Grange the river is barred, but there is no very great difficulty in dragging a boat into the water above the dam. There are the ruins of a mill and a lock here, and the place is shady and interesting enough, but the great, old house that used to be here has suffered degradation. We make an excursion of inquiry in the immediate neighbourhood, and discover a cottage where ginger-beer is on sale and, having opened a test bottle, and tasted it, compliment the old lady of the cottage upon the brew of so excellent a nectar. We have had a pull up from Bidford on a very hot day, and the ginger-beer is just in that condition of fermentation when ginger-beer is at its best; so we toast the maker duly, in long draughts, and hope she will live long.

Near Bidford Grange comes in the Dorsington Brook, the overflow of which assists to cause the floods of this neighbourhood before mentioned. The Avon above the weir has one of those green, reed, rush and osier-grown islands in it, similar to several others that have been



Early Morning at the Marl Cliff.
Near Marl Cliff Village, Bidford.

Haunted Hillborough and Welford 193

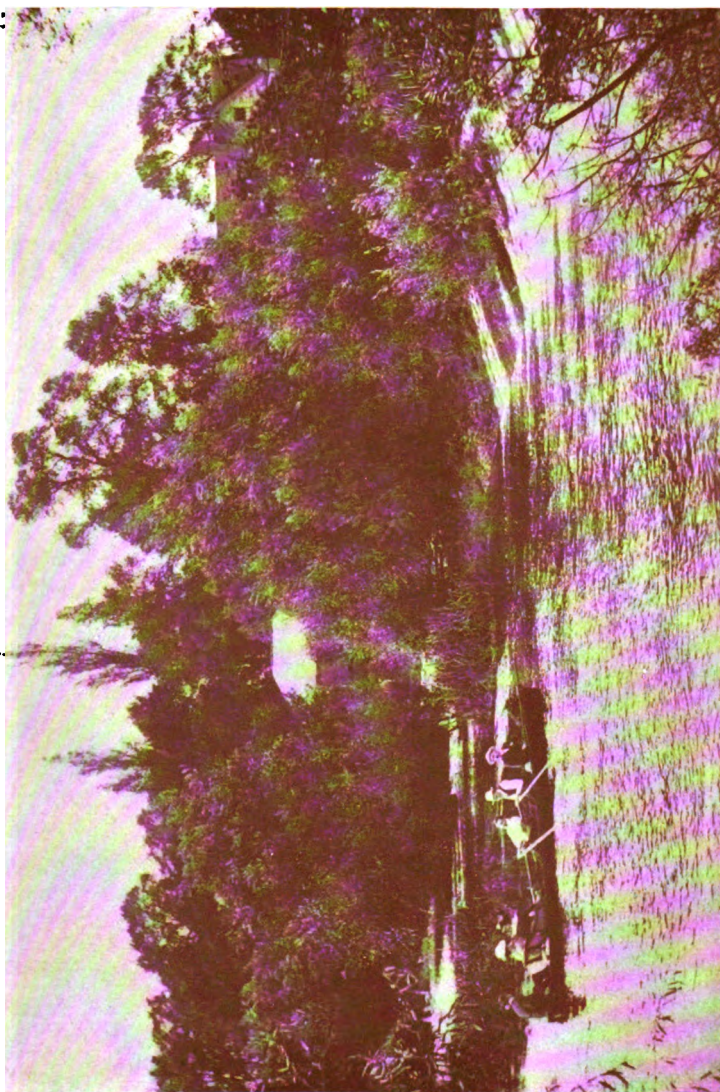
passed, and which are the cool haunt of small birds and aquatic animals. Here, as is usual above a dam, there is plenty of deep water. Over this the boat now travels along with its three occupants refreshed, but the heat of one of those gorgeous days of parting summer, that are sometimes experienced about the middle of August, makes the shade of the willows very grateful, and presently our rowers stop under a good-sized tree, near where a boat is ferrying some people across.

A house that looks like a large farm has been seen a short distance up the bank on the left, and this, we learn, is "Haunted Hillborough." We are anxious to see a haunted house, and are moved to hope that the ghost will be at home. A great many ghosts have been exorcised by the Psychical Society, or entirely laid or driven away by the too close investigations of that inquisitive body, and the total destruction of these interesting supernatural creatures appears imminent, so that it may be difficult to find one some time hence.

Leaving our boat, we ascend the slope and find Hillborough consists of two large farm-houses, called Hillborough Manor and West Hillborough, with a few cottages. We visit the first-mentioned, which appears to have the best ghostly reputation. A charming garden surrounds the house, and the genial occupier is sitting in the pleasant shade of his walnut-tree feeding some extremely tame pigeons. They fly up and perch upon his arms and shoulders and take the food from his hands. Upon the ground lies a fine sheep-dog, the picture of health and beauty, who bears the short and familiar name of Bob, a name not uncommon to his particular species, for he is a bob-tailed, old

English gentleman, evidently of the highest lineage. Upon enquiry for ghosts, Bob's master says he is not aware that there are any ghosts upon the premises, but there are spirits, which shall be brought out, if they will do instead. Detecting a facetious reference to certain fiery demons usually kept in constraint within glass vessels, we intimate the opinion that it may be too early in the day to see spirits to their best advantage. The sun is at about his midday zenith, and it is hardly to be expected that ghosts would appear at this time.

We converse with the proprietor upon the age of the house and the history of Hillborough. The latter remarks that the buildings have, at some time, been much more extensive, and points to the dried-up patches of grass, which denote the near proximity of ruins to the surface. Down the field in the direction of the river, a weak line of turf distinctly indicates the position of an ancient roadway, and there are some small mounds, overgrown with grass, which look as if they would yield archeological treasures to the spade. The probability of Hillborough having once been a larger place than at present is thus made apparent, and with evidence of remains so near the surface, the temptation to dig must be very severe, though nothing might be discovered besides stones. On one side of the house is a round pond and, near this, a large ancient circular dovecote, built to accommodate thousands of pigeons. Inside it is a wonder to behold, with its innumerable nesting-places for the birds, though it has long since ceased to be used for the purpose for which it was built. It was, at one time, common for large



The Weir.

Bidford Grange.

Haunted Hillborough and Welford 195

numbers of pigeons to be bred in these old dovecotes, as pigeons in the form of pasties, roasts, or otherwise prepared, constituted a dietetic delicacy in the bill-of-fare of every feast.

There is a tradition that King Charles II. escaped to this house at Hillborough after the battle of Worcester, bringing with him his treasure chest and, being hotly pursued, was obliged to leave his treasure here in the keeping of some of his followers whilst he fled across the river to Marston, where a house exists, in which there is strong traditional evidence of his having stayed. It is said that the followers of the king were overtaken at Hillborough and were all killed, after burying the money they had in charge. If the place had not been haunted before this, such a story would have amply accounted for its becoming haunted from this time, and for its consequent decadence. With such a story of hidden treasure going abroad the wonder is greater still that the spade has not been brought into requisition. Perhaps these tales of the escape of the Merry Monarch are too numerous to be believed, the number of houses and oak-trees which claim the credit of having harboured him being very great, and seeming to indicate that, if he were making for the coast, he wandered some distance from the direct route.

THE HAUNTED HALL

Hist ! We pass in the moonlight the old Haunted Hall,
Where it stands as if struck with some bane ;
See how rank grows the ivy upon the stone wall,
And half covers the dark window pane.
What is that like the sound of a sigh deeply drawn ?
What that shade with a movement so fast —

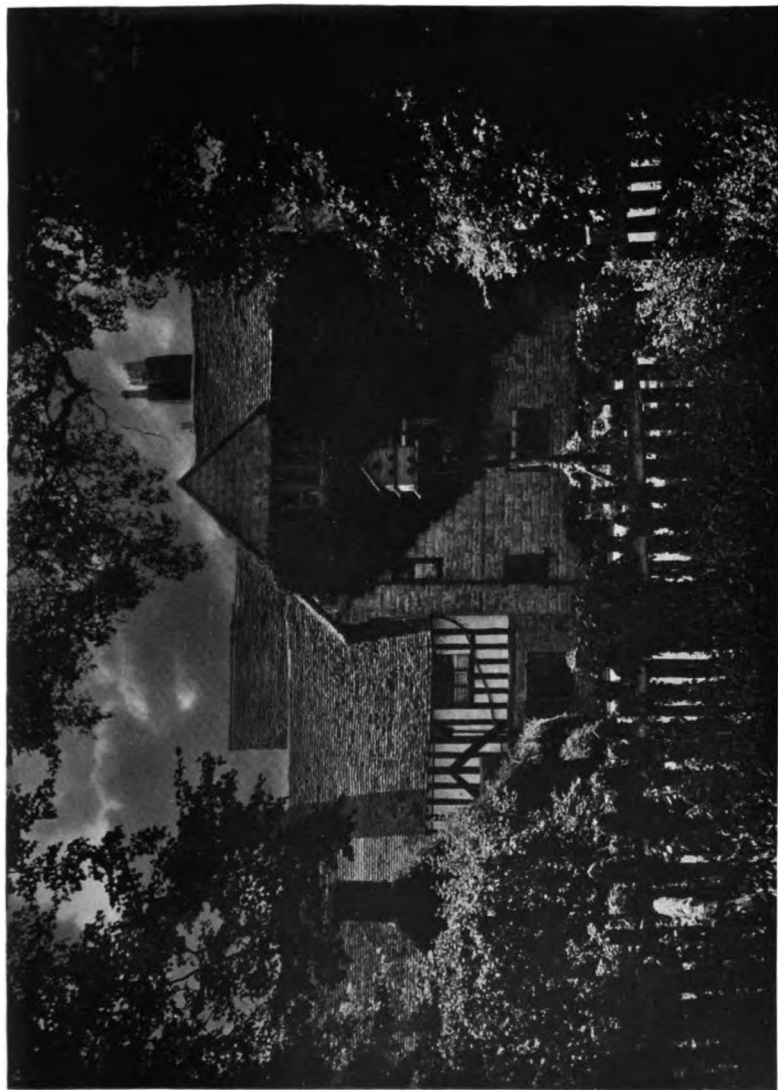
There ! From bush to bush fleeting across the dim lawn,
Till the gate gapes to let it slip past ?

And the icy keen blast that goes by in its trail
Leaves the heart chill, the brain numb and awed ;
And our courage grows weak, as our faces grow pale,
At the thought that a wraith is abroad.
'Tis a thing that's uncertain in kind and in shape,
Which may neither be harmed nor controlled ;
But the earth holds a horror we cannot escape,
And the air teems with terror untold.

The old house is no refuge though barred be its door,
For a spectre stalks through every room,
And a murdered man's blood still bespatters the floor
Of the chamber where dealt was his doom ;
There a footfall is heard in the dead of the night,
A low knock, and the clang of a bell,
Then a horrified shriek of despair and affright,
And the thud of the body that fell.

There again is that sigh from behind the dark shroud
Made by yon trembling elm, and the glare
Of the moon, as she suddenly bursts through a cloud,
Shows a something in white moving there ;
And the eye on that white thing is fixed, and the ear
Strains expectant of cry or of call,
Whilst the hair bristles up at that vision of fear —
The grim ghost of the old Haunted Hall !

The old house, Hillborough Manor, with its many gables and odd-shaped chimneys, is very interesting as it stands. The greater part of it is of Tudor design and an air of age and mystery seems to hang about it, both outside and in. The chief room is an attractive, low-ceiled apartment, wainscoted in dark oak, with a curious cupboard in a corner, said to have been provided for the purpose of storing weapons — bows, arrows, and pikes. There appears to be a space enclosed



Haunted.

Hillborough Manor, Warwickshire.

in one of the walls which is not accessible by any sort of opening. The wall is scarcely likely to be solid to such a great thickness, for there seems no reason for its being so. Curiosity may some day be strong enough to break into this, as also the adjacent ground below which the ruins or foundations of other buildings without doubt exist. There is much about the place to suggest ghosts and, midday though it now be, it is easy to realise that it has an appearance at night quite in keeping with its reputation, and spirits have doubtless been taken to combat the ghosts prior to arrivals and departures to and from "Haunted Hillborough" by night, though, as a rule, it may be doubted whether such Tam-o'-Shanter courage is of any avail in practice. It is cheerful enough, however, in the front of the house at the present time, where the sunshine makes a netted shadow, and Bob, the shepherd's dog, lies stretched in repose, but gets up on our return from making a tour of survey and thrusts his moist nose into the hand that had before caressed him.

Where our boat lies upon the Avon, down below Hillborough, it is very warm this mid-day and we stay under the willows there to take lunch before proceeding to Welford. There is no need of haste as the distance we have to cover to-day is not great, and it is pleasant and cool in the shade of the branches which extend well over the water and dip so low as to be within reach of the hand. Here, therefore, we lie to eat the repast of chicken and ham with which our hostess at Bidford has provided us. The inquiry for ghosts seems to have had the effect of sharpening our appetites, and the accidental loss of the chicken by its slipping out of

hand into the river and going to the bottom, like a lump of lead, is a dire catastrophe under the circumstances, necessitating a simple and frugal luncheon of bread and ham. In consequence of this reverse of fortune our stay beneath the willow boughs is abbreviated and we row forward to Welford lower lock.

The lock is broken down and, together with the weir, makes quite a picturesque ruin. It was built in a substantial way of large blocks of grey stone, and many of these are upheaved and scattered, and it is a matter of great wonderment how the structure could have been reduced to so utter a ruin. The condition proves how thoroughly man's work is overthrown when left to the vicissitudes of wind and weather, without care or occasional mending; but it seems a great pity to see a good work like this undone. The ownership of the locks and rights of navigation by barges, or cargo boats, was bought up by a railway company, in order to abolish the competition of water-carriage with the railway. Having purchased this property, the company deliberately allowed it to fall into decay, costly as it had been to construct, and thus the locks and weirs, built as the result of an admirable enterprise, have been allowed to go to ruin.

We leave our boat in the old lock and climb the steep bank of the field adjacent. It is a fine, wild bank, partly covered with bushes, and the hill of which this field is one side is called Crest Hill. The gate of this pleasant bushy and banky field leads from the road which comes up from Welford on to Crest Hill, and from this gate one of the prettiest views to be anywhere obtained upon the river Avon presents itself.

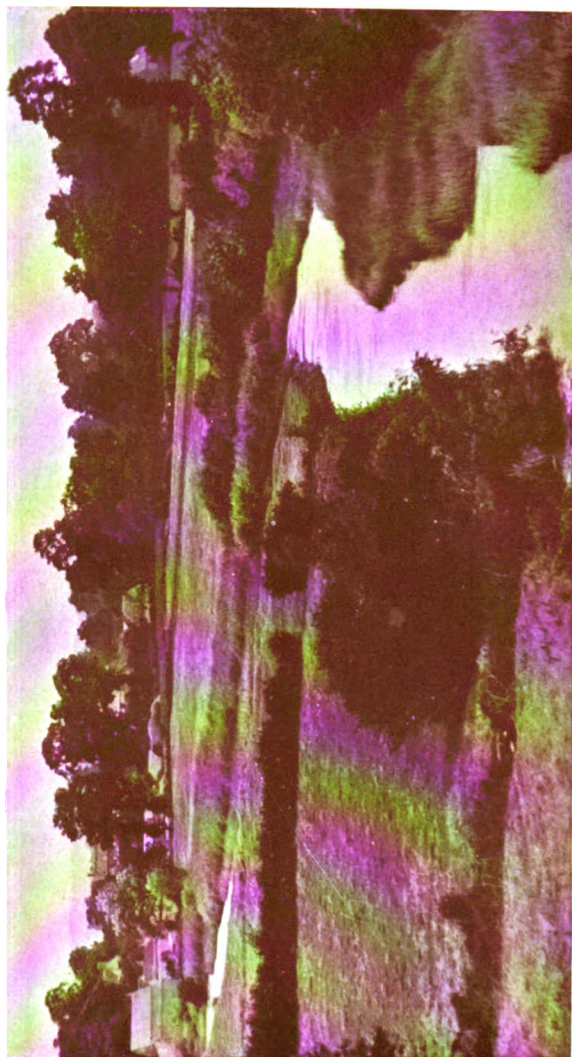
It needs to be seen itself, as it is too wide and panoramic for representation in a picture. The Avon comes down, meandering through green meads, from where the mill and some of the houses of Welford are visible amongst the trees a mile away. The rushes are encroaching upon its width as, since the destruction of the lower lock, the water is but shallow in this part of the river. There are large plantations of cherry and plum trees in the scene, and Binton Hill, looking very dark with its woody covering, is in the background along with other hills, and the steep slope of the rough pasture, which has sheep grazing upon it, is in the foreground. The broken-down lock and weir and this lovely river-side hill are commonly the end object of boating parties, and on Saturday and Sunday afternoons a good many of the Bidford trippers get as far as this in their boats, and sit about upon the great stones of the lock or upon the neighbouring green banks. At other times it is a quiet and serene spot left to the sheep with, perhaps, a solitary fisherman standing or sitting upon a stone and dangling his line into the deeper water.

The boat being hauled over the stones, the voyage to Welford from the broken lock is completed by twenty minutes' sculling, when we come to Welford Mill and the upper weir. The lock situated there is also out of use, and our boat has to be taken out of the water to get past the obstruction. The old mill with the mill-house and adjoining farm-buildings are the first objects to be met with in Welford, and, as viewed from the opposite bank of the river, they make a striking picture into which the church

tower enters when the view is taken from the right position.

Having landed, we proceed up Mill Lane from the river to the village. There are several pretty cottages in Mill Lane. The first one arrived at is the ivy-covered retreat of a pleasant elderly occupant who, being met near his home, enters into an agreeable chat about the village and the neighbourhood, and shows us the two rooms of his little dwelling, and the garden and orchard behind it. He gives the impression of having forsaken a busier life and sought this rustic abode in which to spend the evening of his days in peace. A more retired and peaceful spot than Mill Lane, Welford, is surely not to be found, and if the river-damps in the winter time do not prove rheumatic, it must be an agreeable place to one who would live this half-hermit life. We ask him if there be any mementos of Shakespeare in the locality, and he replies that he is afraid that, like any other prophet in his own country, Shakespeare is but little honoured here, and tells a tale of a villager who, being questioned by a stranger as to his knowledge of Shakespeare, replied, "Oh, ah! I've heard on him; he's a bloke as keeps a museum at Stratford."

Inasmuch as it is but a short five miles from Welford to Stratford by the road, such ignorance is overwhelming. It is almost equalled, however, by that of another villager actually met with here, who states, concerning the hill by the river, called Crest Hill, described above, that it derived its name from a battle fought there, though time had brought about a slight alteration in the name, for the battle was the Battle of Crécy!



Meandering through Green Meads.

Welford, Gloucestershire.

Haunted Hillborough and Welford 201

From this it would appear that the writers of English history have fallen into error, and put the Black Prince to quite an unnecessary amount of travel, since it was at Welford that the Battle of Crécy was fought and the enemy so utterly routed!

CHAPTER XVII

WELFORD-ON-AVON

AT the top of Mill Lane is Welford Church, surrounded by a churchyard that stands some feet above the level of the adjoining roadway, and is enclosed by a stone wall. The churchyard is entered by a fine old lich-gate, roofed with much-weathered tiles, and its wooden posts grown grey by exposure to wind and weather. Beyond the church and past some quaint cottages, and we soon come to The Bell Inn, which rises in modest height at the corner where we turn out of the High Street towards the river. But "The Bell" on this occasion has no rooms to let and can only provide us with a simple, substantial tea with bacon and eggs, which we are glad to take as a supplement to our trifling luncheon, before seeking lodgings elsewhere.

The fact is, Welford has become a summer resort, so popular that possibly as many as fifty strangers are temporarily resident in it in the month of August. After tea, however, we succeed in finding the accommodation we require in a cottage. We learn by question and experience that the reason people resort to Welford is to live for a space in this village in a cottage, and many of the cottagers take in lodgers who are eager for this non-exciting life. Now, whether they all think life in a cottage at Welford ideal must depend



Welford-on-Avon.

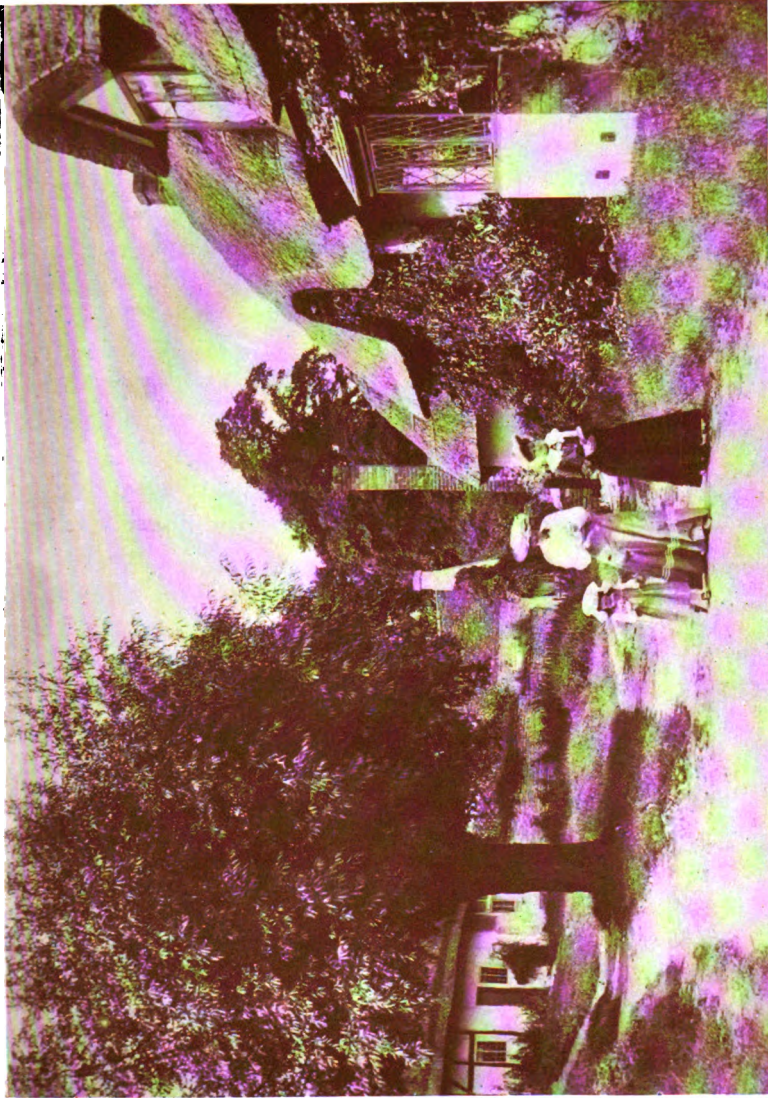
Welford, Gloucestershire.

upon what they expect, and the habit of life to which they are accustomed. For the "smart set" it is of small account. For those who must live luxuriously, it is too rough. For those gregarious persons who are largely dependent upon other people for their entertainment it is too slow. If you stroll down the high road of the village you will see how slow it is. It seems more appropriate to call it High Road than High Street, since High Street is a townish term betokening shop fronts and stone pavements, with some movement and bustle of business, and High Street, or High Road, Welford, exhibits nothing of the sort. It has houses connected with its broad highway more or less closely, but they straggle down in a loose order, being independent in position and style, no two alike and hardly two in close juxtaposition. At the post-office end there is a bit of green upon which stands a very tall may-pole, gaily painted in spiral stripes. At that end, also, are the two general stores of the village, where they sell tea and candles, calico and clothes-pegs, and other things that might be classified in equally close and congenial relationship. Most of the houses stand back in their gardens and are of small size, though here and there one makes a bid to be thought large, or old, or interesting; some have outhouses, not always in the best of repair; there is an old barn called the Crab Mill, which contains one of those cider-mills with a great stone crusher which is drawn round by a horse when cider is being made. The houses and buildings are interspersed with trees of many species, and much smaller greenery with some flowers. Down this street everybody moves at leisurely pace. The world, they

say, is going at a great speed somewhere outside, but that hardly concerns Welford, or the people who lean on their garden gates and converse with deliberation and for as long as they will with every passer-by. There is work to be done, of course, though, now the corn is carried and the damsons are gathered, the urgent business of the year is done with. You may think of going to Stratford market next Friday, but the Friday after will do as well; there is nothing to send you there with inconvenient haste.

The cottage which affords our party temporary residence at Welford is in the occupation of an agriculturist and his wife. He grows fruit and vegetables for market, and sometimes goes to work with his sons in the fields. His daughter is the pretty serving-maid to the visitors. The house is too small to provide the whole of our party with bedrooms, but a friendly neighbour gives the loan of a room, being repaid by a similar kindness upon another occasion. There is a small sitting-room: the ceiling of it is low, with a great, rough, protruding beam running across it, and there is a window with small panes at either end of the room; one looks into the street, and the other into the back garden where red cat-tails, phlox, dahlias, sunflowers, canary-creeper, and marigolds make a show of colour above the green of potatoes, kidney-beans, and cabbages, and they will presently be followed by the Michaelmas daisies and chrysanthemums, which are even now in bud.

If, before you go to Welford, you were catechised by questions upon the place, to the question of "What is Welford?" you might answer like a good scholar at a



The Way to the River.

Welford.

national school: "Welford, sometimes called 'Welford-on-Avon,' is a village of Gloucestershire with about five hundred inhabitants, situated five miles from the market-town of Stratford-on-Avon." But, after you have stayed in Welford, you might give another answer to the same question: "Welford is an idyllic English village, which is characterised by nothing so much as by those simplest of acts and facts pertaining to human life in its more natural state, and those surroundings which are the gifts of Nature." In things which are simple and commonplace it seems extraordinarily rich, though that may be partly due to there being nothing else to engage the mind. But, after all, the essence of human life consists in things simple and commonplace: the gathering in of the last sheaves of the harvest, and the driving of the plough into the stubbles; the milking of kine and the feeding of pigs; the picking of fruit and the digging up of potatoes. These agricultural pursuits are common to Welford and many other villages, and yet there seems more of these things in this neighbourhood than elsewhere. The young swallows and martins twitter in joyous delight of the world into which they have been hatched, and they fly and rest and fly again, preparatory to flying right away. The larks soar up. The hare leaps from her dewy lair at your feet when you cross the field; and there are owls in the wood on Welford Hill. At night, when everybody is a-bed, they come down and flutter round the village, and you hear them as you lie awake: "Too-wheet, too-wheet, too-wheet; too whoo-oo-oo-oo-oo-oo." And so they keep on until the cocks begin to crow against each other, and the ducks to quack,

and the geese to cackle — sounds betokening the incoming of day.

The rustic natives of Welford know little about Shakespeare, but Nature here acknowledges him her observant son. Welford is as powerful even as Stratford in establishing this motherhood. You become very definitely aware of it before you have been here three days. There are other villages around which, no doubt, share the claim. Some of them are mentioned in a legend said to have been written by Shakespeare, though the lines are hardly Shakespearian. What they may be rather taken to indicate is that Shakespeare was known to have been familiar with all these villages and some of their inhabitants. Welford is not mentioned, but the villages which are mentioned lie within a short distance all round it. The lines are not newly invented but authentically handed down. They have been burned into numerous jugs and cups, both latterly and of old, and in some houses these crocks are reached down from shelves or brackets where they are treasured in order that the lines may be read by the questioning stranger. They are:

“ Piping Pebworth, Dancing Marston,
Haunted Hillborough, Hungry Grafton,
Dodging Exhall, Papist Wixford,
Beggarly Broom, and Drunken Bidford.”

Piping Pebworth, dancing Marston, and dodging Exhall, probably have reference to something connected with the inhabitants. No doubt music was cultivated to some extent in the villages in those days and there may have been a band of pipers at Pebworth and some morris-dancers at Marston.



The Approach to the Village.
Binton, Warwickshire.

We take walks to some of these villages, whilst staying at Welford, and others we have already become acquainted with in our voyaging. Up Welford Hill and down Rumer Hill and you are in Marston, generally marked Long Marston, or Marston Sicca, on the maps. We go up Crest Hill past that gate whence you get the fine view of the Avon, and through the village of Dorsington to get to Pebworth. Dorsington, or "Dossinton" as it is locally called, has a piquant-looking little church with a brick tower, and Pebworth is a pretty, up-and-down village of greater size. The parish of Temple Grafton is separated from Welford Parish only by the river, and Exhall and Wixford adjoin Grafton. Pebworth and Marston are in Gloucestershire and the rest in Warwickshire.

Besides these, there are other villages near to Welford. There is the parish church of Weston-on-Avon, less than a mile from the may-pole, down Chapel Lane and through a couple of fields by a footpath over stiles. Weston is as beggarly as Broom. It is so unpopulous that the church seems hardly necessary, and it appears as if money could not be found to modernise it; which, perhaps, is no great pity. It has a paving of grave-stones and its old, high, square box-pews look aged and out-of-date. There is also Binton, which is a city in comparison to Weston, for it has a street — that is, a village street of stone houses. Binton Hill and church are prominent objects in the Welford neighbourhood. To get to Binton you go by "The Four Alls," and over the river by Binton Bridges. The plural, "bridges," is here used to denote the little succession of arches by which the Avon and the marshy

ground next to the river are crossed. "The Four Alls" is a public-house at the bridge-foot, having a sign bearing the portraits of four personages important in the management of public affairs, each of whom does all of something, as thus:

A king who rules over all ; a parson who prays for all ;
A soldier who fights for all ; a farmer who pays for all.

Wherefore "The Four Alls." The meaning of the sign is probably intended to be more broadly interpreted than indicated by the petty influence of the four individuals. You are, no doubt, intended to adopt the larger idea and see, represented in the four figures, Law and Order, Religion, National Safety, and the Necessaries of Life.

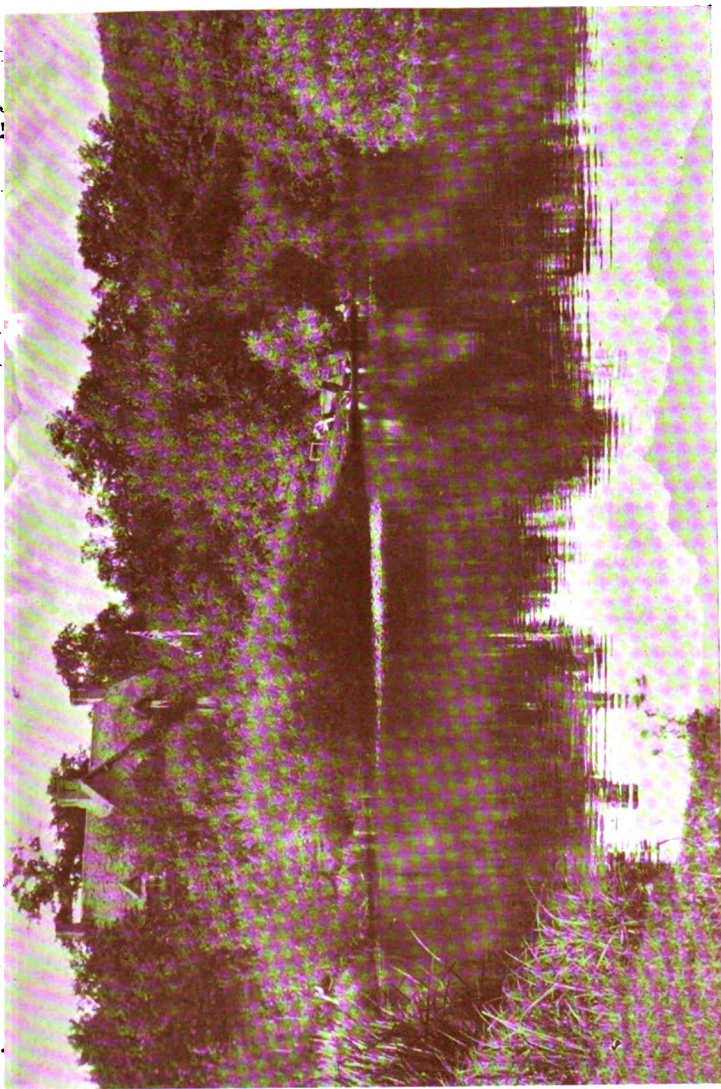
When you pass over Binton Bridges you go from Warwickshire into Gloucestershire, or *vice versa*, and "The Four Alls" is consequently a meeting-place for the men of both counties, and over their beer they often discuss the merits of either shire with no little amount of boasting. As the inn itself is in Gloucestershire, the men of this county have the advantage in being able to tell the Warwickshire men to get back into their own county whenever they become too argumentative. The argument is likely to turn upon the best sort of plough, or cow, or sow, or the best feed for cart-horses in hard work, and the plough man from Binton in Warwickshire holds his cup of ale in his hand while he lays down the law upon this point, and says that the best consists of crushed oats with a handful of bean-flour, mixed with chopped hay-and-straw chaff, along with good dry clover, or hay. Having so

delivered himself he looks round at the company as challenging any denial of his dictum, but, as no man of Welford in Gloucestershire, or elsewhere, dare say him nay, he smiles and takes refreshment. If by some abstruse calculation in physiological chemistry you endeavoured to show him that the nitrogen or the carbon was in excess in this dietary, he would almost certainly think you foolish and very likely tell you so and, generally speaking, in his simple way, he is a truthful person, and not unwise in placing greater reliance upon his own practical observations in the matter of feeding cart-horses, than in mere scientific theory.

Thus, at Welford, you live quietly, finding exercise and interest in walking to this and that little village, and in conversing with rustics upon affairs of the farm and the fruit-garden. This kind of idling is done with least disturbance in fine weather when you may range the country by footpaths across the fields, taking the path you find on hazard, as it matters little where it leads you, because you have no particular object in arriving anywhere. If it grows showery you have to stand up under trees, or in some farm cart-hovel, whose open front gives ample air and a good view of the drifting clouds and the lightning flashes, if there chance to be any. In such a hovel you are likely to be in the company of the cock and hens, for chanticleer and his multigamous following object to rain and will wait under cover in human fashion until the storm passes. You should remember that you are a stranger begging shelter in his proper domain and comport yourself so quietly as not to drive him forth to get

his fine feathers wet and bedraggled. If the day prove decidedly rainy you spend some hours in your cottage, part of the time with your shoulder propping the jamb of the open door, smoking the consoling pipe, and passing remarks alternately with those within in the dry and those without in the wet. You bethink yourself, presently, that you have some shopping to do, and take a walk, with an umbrella, to that emporium of dry goods situated near the may-pole. Here you purchase a box of matches for yourself and a reel of thread and a packet of needles upon commission, and are struck with satisfaction at the large amount of change you get out of a shilling. It seems quite difficult to spend money at Welford — which is a somewhat unusual experience.

The most lasting source of occupation for the visitor to Welford is, however, the river with its fishing and boating. There are boats on hire here, both at "The Four Alls" and at Welford Mill. Above the mill the Avon forms a deep stream for the mile-and-a-half to Binton Bridges. This part of the river is a favourite fishing ground — the best on the Avon, according to the opinion of an angler with whom we discuss the subject. He declares that he has caught sixty pounds of roach and bream here of an afternoon — another afternoon, and not the one when any reliable witness was present to see the fish and attest their number and correct weight. There is really no need to catch so many at one time; the story is over-told; it amounts to a waste of fish; but, in sober earnest, you may angle here with fair success, and troll for pike, in the season, with chance of good sport.



At the Bend of the River.
In the Parish of Temple Grafton, Warwickshire.

We are often upon the water whilst at Welford, our boat being always in waiting for us down by the mill at the bottom of the lane. The scene at the mill is a good one, with its weir, rush-edged island, and the buildings and trees. Higher up, the church, together with the large, stone-built rectory, becomes plainly visible from the river, and the image of the two is reflected on the surface of the water. Further on, the Avon turns a sharp bend; and, at the corner, rises a steep hill, with trees among which is set a dwelling overlooking the water. It is called "The Black Cliff" and is an attractive spot. There are people staying there who have boats of their own moored below the house, and a tent and flag set up in the garden. We call it the Home of Beauty at the Bend of the River.

Round this bend we row upon many an occasion, both in the morning and in the afternoon, sometimes lingering until sunset, when the view down towards the mill is looking so soft and serene in the last light of day. Later still, when the red and gold of the sunset have died right out, sometime after we have partaken of supper, and the more early retiring of the villagers have gone to bed, we walk out and, turning down Mill Lane, come to the riverside and the landing-stage where our boat is secured, loose her, and float slowly up to the Black Cliff in the moonlight, to find there Sweet Peace in residence with Beauty. We float back even more slowly, and notice the church and the rectory still showing in solid substance in their proper place, and in dim reflection in the unruffled stream and, with but a little steering to avoid the danger-spot where the water goes down darkly towards

the weir, we let the boat drift back under moon and stars to her haven by Welford Mill.

AT THE BEND OF THE RIVER

At the bend of the river,
Where the cliff rises high,
And the Avon for ever
Flows lingeringly by,
Beauty had a bright dwelling,
Where Love was a guest,
And fair beyond telling,
Sweet Peace found a rest.

One bought Beauty's dwelling,
And bade Love with him stay,
But Love brooks no compelling,
And with Peace fled away:
At the bend of the river,
Where the cliff rises high
And the Avon for ever
Flows lingeringly by.



Shades and Reflections.

Weston-on-Avon, Gloucestershire.

CHAPTER XVIII

PAST LUDDINGTON TO STRATFORD

AT Stratford there is a mill and behind that mill a store of water held up in the river by a dam. In dry weather the mill uses up its store of water faster than it is replenished by the stream, and by the end of the week the store has run low but, as Sunday is a day of rest for both millers and mill, the sluices that let the water on to the mill-wheel are shut down from Saturday until the first working-day of the next week, during which time the depth of water above the mill is increased, only a very small quantity being able to escape down the weirs. The effect upon the depth of water below the mill is interesting to navigators of the Avon between Welford and Stratford in the present condition of ineffective locks. There is a decrease in the depth below the mill when the sluices are shut down and the water prevented passing. Thus it sometimes happens in dry summer weather, that on Saturday afternoons and Sundays, or upon other days when the mill sluices are shut, this portion of the river is navigable with difficulty, even for boats of the shallowest draught.

Choosing a suitable day, we set out upon the last stage of our voyage. We pass, for the last time, the beautiful bend of the river at Black Cliff and, after threading our way through the rushes at Binton

Bridges, we get a fair piece of water with a good view of the dark Binton Hill, upon looking backward. The East and West Junction Railway runs along under the hill and has a station there, called Binton, which serves the village of that name as well as Welford. At Weston there are fine trees by the river and about the church and farmsteads which together make up the hamlet, and a little higher up the fairway of the river is obstructed by the remains of a lock and weir, or wyre, the ruin is too complete to say which. It is a rather difficult place to pass, as the passage has to be made against a strong stream that rushes down beside a little island created by the stones of the broken-down masonry of the structure that was once here. The stones are, to a large extent, overgrown by river grasses and other vegetation. It is found to be impossible to mount this rapid whilst the party are in the boat, for where she is able to make way against the current she goes aground, and where she can swim the water turns her head round, and after the most strenuous pulling on the part of the oarsmen and the utmost anxiety on the part of the steerswoman, over and over repeated, the invariable result is for the boat to be forced back and, as soon as the pulling ceases, to go drifting rapidly down the river. At length we pull to the island and, landing there, by means of oars and boat-hook and much dragging and pushing, we get the lightened boat past the swift water.

Up towards Luddington the water is shallow, and in some places the boat's keel touches bottom. In other places there is a great growth of water-ranunculus.

and the long, submerged, streaming stems of this water-weed impede the passage of the boat and annoy the rowers, great weights of it enveloping the blades of our sculls. We avoid it as much as we can, steering into the water which appears to be deepest and most free from such obstructions, and before long we see a great barrier of trees in advance which shuts out the further course of the river above, as well as a large patch of sky, and this proves to be the position of the dam at Luddington.

This dam is rather high; the water pours over it from above down two or three small, steep weirs, which lie between as many in-and-out gravelly strands. There appears to be no way to get into the deep water above, except by lifting the boat up one of these weirs — a task which would be very difficult when, after a heavy freshet, a large volume of water is rushing down. The place is deeply overshadowed by the large elms and other trees that grow here, and the ubiquitous fisherman, plying his craft from a punt, adds the necessary dot of human interest to a quiet scene.

We do not immediately attempt the task of getting the boat over the weir, not being of too independent a spirit to obtain assistance in the village if that course approves itself to our better judgment, and so we land and go into Luddington to talk the matter over with anyone we may meet. We strike a footpath passing the church, which has a somewhat modern appearance, looking as if it had been rebuilt within the last generation or two. Shakespeare is said to have been married here, though there is no actual evidence of such a fact beyond the tradition which may have had its origin

simply in the likelihood, as it would have been a convenient and quiet out-of-town church, situated less than three miles from Shottery, where his bride's family lived. The village itself is very ancient. There are but few houses, and most of these form a little street upon the lane that runs along almost parallel to the river. In the sunshine to-day, their gardens being bright with flowers, and with the air about them of that virtue which comes of great age, the straggling line of cottages, with a larger house or two, appeal to the artistic sense. We engage in conversation with a villager from whom we obtain the information that the whole village, and a wide acreage of land around, are owned in fee tail by a certain noble marquis, whose name is, no doubt, sufficiently often mentioned in connection with all the things which he does or leaves undone for the satisfaction or disappointment of his tenants.

We stroll along the lane in the Shottery direction and, after proceeding for a mile, reach the main road running from Stratford to Evesham, where it commences the ascent of Bardon Hill. Turning up this road we climb the hill. As we approach the summit, the one of the party who has led us here turns and points back with outstretched arm.

"That is Stratford," he says.

There, indeed, lies Shakespeare's town exposed to view from end to end. The church, with its tapering steeple, is prominent, and so also is the tower of the Memorial Theatre, and the houses are distinctly visible, as it is a clear day and the distance not more than two miles.



Stratford-on-Avon from Bardon Hill.

Bardon Hill, Warwickshire.

On the sides of Bardon Hill are cultivated fields where the plough and harrow are seen at work, and some belated barley is being carted. Down to the left, at a very short distance, lies the village of Shuttery, which is approached by a lane opening from the road at the bottom of the hill. The main road itself, with its enclosing hedges, leads the eye to the town, from or towards which go passengers at intervals — now a waggon and team, now a cyclist; anon a carriage and pair, and a motor car, and behind them a tramp who, having tasted of the fare provided for his kind at Stratford, is *en route* for the next town that boasts itself the head of a union of parishes and maintains an hotel at the public expense for the accommodation of pedestrians such as he, though it may be commonly known by the title of "workhouse."

From this distance of Bardon Hill you may take a comprehensive view of Stratford, and standing at this point you can think of the town and the country round as a whole. When you come into the streets your thoughts are occupied with that which is before your eyes. In the town they advertise Shakespeare, but if you stand here for half-an-hour you will find Nature herself advertises him continuously on Bardon Hill.

We look at the town and at the village — first at Stratford and then at Shuttery — and think of the youthful Shakespeare, human in his emotions and failings, unrecognised as the budding genius of his age, but having that within him which in a few years would bring him a world-wide and everlasting reputation.

There is no doubt that Shakespeare passed over Bardon Hill many a time, both in his early days and

in his later life after he had returned to his native town, and from the summit of the hill he will have looked down upon Stratford as we are doing, and this bit of central England will have appeared very much the same then as now. The church-spire there was in the scene which he looked upon and so were the Welcombe Hills, and Meon Hill yonder, and the Cotswolds, and these hills were the nearest approach to mountains that came within his early experiences. Here, for sure, we have a thousand objects that are responsible for Shakespeare's earliest and strongest impressions, and so we like to stand here and view the hills around, the valley, and the town that may claim to have given first nurture to the mind of the great poet.

We walk back to Luddington then, and return to the river down a green lane which we call "Blackberry Lane." It merely leads through the gate at its end into the river-side field. There is a party of children in it gathering blackberries off the hedge. One little girl takes hold of her sister's frock in demure shyness, and a rascal of a boy, with merry, sparkling eyes, catching our intent to photograph him, thinks it fine fun.

Some assistance having been enlisted to get the boat above the dam, we are now again afloat, and proceeding towards Stratford. We pass, immediately above Luddington and standing a little way above the river bank, a large farm-house in red brick, with numerous outbuildings and corn and hay ricks and tall poplars growing near them. The name of the place is Lower Milcote, and where the present house stands was



Blackberry Lane.
Luddington, Warwickshire.

anciently a moated grange. In this locality, in early times, appears to have been fought a great battle, probably between the native Britons and the invading Saxons. The evidence of it is again the skeletons of the dead, found lying in large numbers in a place near here. The shapes of the skulls show the men to have been of mixed breed, such as the Saxons were.

A mile and a half above Luddington, a large tributary, the River Stour, comes curving in. Near its mouth are seen some water-wagtails and, on the river bank, valerian is growing and teasles, and a briar whose hips have turned vermillion. The water near the mouth of the Stour proves to be very shallow at present, but after heavy rains this tributary brings in suddenly a great volume of water. The next object of interest is the small coppice known as the Wyre Brake, and here the bottom of the boat strikes with some force the stones of a broken-down wyre, which, being immersed are unseen and unexpected. It is here and above that the water becomes extremely shallow when the mill sluice-gates are closed, but to-day the boat has just enough water to float in. Stratford church spire is now within sight from the river bank, and at the end of half a mile from the Brake the boat passes under a railway bridge; then she requires to be punted over a very shallow place near the foot-bridge which crosses the river here, and immediately after this she floats under the walls of a great, dusty-looking mill and runs on to the strand below its weir — and we have reached Stratford-on-Avon.

To get into the water above the mill requires the boat to be taken out of the river and carried a short

distance, but that can be done at leisure. She is quite safe lying below the mill, where we leave her for the present and walk up into the town.

IN SHAKESPEARE'S PRAISE.

Now of Shakespeare I would sing,
Help me, Muse, in my desire,
Bring me words with rhythmic ring,
Rhyme, and true poetic fire.
Ah, the string refuses sound,
And my tongue is silence bound,
Mute are voice and lyre!

Bard, should I sing praise of thee,
I must fail, or do thee wrong —
Shakespeare! Prince of Poetry!
Lord of Language! Soul of Song!
All the world crowns thee with bays,
Thine is universal praise,
I but join the throng.



Shakespeare.
(The Droeshout engraving.)

CHAPTER XIX

STRATFORD-ON-AVON, ANCIENT AND MODERN

THE paved ford from which Stratford takes its name, was probably constructed in Roman times, but the first recorded allusion to the place is connected with the monastery founded here, by, or in the time of, Ethelred King of Mercia, somewhere prior to the year 700 A. D., and shortly afterwards we find Bishop Ecgwin making an exchange of Fladbury for Stratford; and for many hundreds of years afterwards, succeeding Bishops of Worcester were chief owners of the land. At the Domesday survey the manor is described as owned by the Bishop. King Richard I. granted the right of holding a market in the town once a week, the original market-day having been Thursday, since changed to Friday. At this time there were some parcels of land in Stratford called burgages, which were leased by the Bishop to certain of the burgesses of the town for a quarterly payment of twelve pence. The fact of the inhabitants being called burgesses, as well as the granting of a market, seems to indicate that Stratford at this time was a place of urban importance. King John granted to the Bishop of Worcester of his time the right to hold a fair in Stratford of two days' continuance upon the Eve of Holy Trinity. The time of these fairs generally coincided with the days of the saints in whose honour the local church was

dedicated. They partook originally of the nature of religious feasts and brought money to the church in the shape of alms given by those who came to the fair, and by tolls levied upon the merchants attending. In later times they tended to degenerate into dissolute bacchanals, which were debasing to religion and the church with which they were so closely connected.

Besides the monastery there was a small local fraternity in Stratford known as the Guild of the Holy Cross, founded in the thirteenth century. To the brethren of this guild belonged the Guild Chapel in Stratford, and the Guildhall and old Grammar School. Attached to this guild at the time of the dissolution were four priests and a schoolmaster clerk. The Guild of the Holy Cross had done much good secular work, such as providing the means of education for the town, and taking chief part in its local government. Its income, which amounted at that time to the modest sum of about £50 a year, was seized as being that of a religious institution of the nature of such as were to be suppressed, but, perhaps in consideration of the useful work that had been done, most of the property of the Guild was afterwards restored to Stratford, to be utilised for charitable and clerical purposes.

In the days of Queen Elizabeth, Stratford was a town of moderate size as towns then were, having about the same importance in Warwickshire as a market, as it possesses to-day, though relative to some other towns it was larger then than it is now. At the commission of inquiry into the fighting strength of England instituted by Henry VIII., Stratford was

found to have 135 able men who might be called upon for fighting. They were made up of —

Archers iiii^x and i (four score and one).
Bilmen liiii (54).

In the time of the great Warwickshire historian, Dugdale, who lived in Shakespeare's time and after, there were 457 houses in Stratford, which would be equivalent to a population of from 2,000 to 3,000.

By letters patent of King Edward VI., Stratford became an incorporated borough in 1553, eleven years before the birth of William Shakespeare, and some interesting information concerning the condition of the town about that time has been obtained¹ from the Records of the Stratford Borough Council and other local records which have been preserved to our own generation.

The Stratford Council at first consisted of a bailiff, a chief alderman, thirteen other aldermen and fourteen burgesses. The last mentioned were called capital burgesses to distinguish them from common burgesses, or freemen of the borough. The dignity of the respective members of the council was indicated by a difference in the manner in which they were addressed. The bailiff and chief alderman were not mentioned by name, but were Mr. Bailiff and Mr. Alderman. The remaining aldermen were distinguished by having the honourable prefix Mr. to their names, whilst the burgesses were given their simple Christian and surnames without any title. The whole of them were the "maysters and brethren." They appointed executive officers

¹ See the researches of Mr. J. O. Halliwell-Phillips.

to conduct the business of the borough and carry out their behests. These were the chamberlains, who kept the accounts, and arranged the business of the meetings, the ale-tasters and leather-sealers, and the serjeants and constables. The trades of brewing and leather curing were under regulation, and the simple taste as regards the ale had to be relied upon as a test of strength and quality, where we in present times should be guided by an analytical examination.

The recorded doings of this Town Council are extremely quaint. The members of the council consisted chiefly of the shopkeepers of Stratford, and John Shakespeare, the father of the poet, was one of them. He held most of the offices of the Corporation and was capital burgess, alderman, and bailiff, in succession. In one place he is authentically described as a glover, but at one time of his career and another, he probably practised two or three minor trades, such as those of butcher and wool dealer. He was elected to the dignity of alderman in the place of one William Bot, who had been "expulsyd" the council under circumstances which tend to show that present town councils enjoy a heritage of character from those of Tudor times. The following resolution is from the Stratford Council Book of date May 9, 1565.

" Yt is agreed by the belyf, master alderman, with the rest of the aldermen and burgesses, that forasmuch as William Bot, one of the aldermen, by report of credible personnes hath spoken evell wordes by Mr. Belyf and other, that ther was never a honest man of the Councell or the body of the Corporacion of Stratford, whereupon the said William Bot was send for and dyd not cum to hys answer, and for that he hathe geven suche obprobrious wordes, he is not worthy hencefurthe to be of the Councell, and so he is expulsyd to be none

of the company, and to this agrement the belyf, aldermen and burgesyz hereunto hath subscrybyd ther names and set ther markes with ther own handes."

Another resolution of the Council made about this time is also eloquent of the treatment to which the "maysters and brethren" were subject at the hands of their critical fellow townsmen. Evidently it was always so.

"No person or persones ynhabytyng within the burro of Stratford shall revyell or myssay the belyf, aldermen, capital bugesez, chamberlins, nor no other offecer or officers of the sayd burro in payn of forfeitur xxs. . . . Yf he that so offendyth hath not to pay the sayd forfeitur, then to be prisoned by the space of thre days and thre nyghtes."

The people who "revyell and myssay" the corporation and its officers in these days are in a much safer position than when the governing body had such unlimited power of making local laws, and many corporation officers will lament that offenders of this class cannot now be submitted to the "forfeitur" of a sum equivalent to £10, or imprisonment for three days failing prompt payment.

The accounts of the borough as rendered by the chamberlains are of great interest. It was the custom of the corporation to regale the notable persons who came to Stratford upon wine and sugar, but it is not clear whether they ate the sugar and drank the wine, or took them mixed. Sugar was a luxury at that time and very dear, only having somewhat recently come into use in England.

"Imprimis for wine and sugar when the justices were here	iiis. viiid.
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Item to John Smith for wine when Sir John Huband was at the College	iiis. iiid.
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Item to Harry for mending the leades of the chappell	iis. vii ^{id} .
Item Paid to Mr. Jenkis Schoolmaster for his half yeres wages	x li.
Item to John Smith for a pottell of wine and a q. of sugar for Sir Thomas Lucy	xvid.
Item paid for ii postes and railles for the pynfold	vis.
Item to the keeper for the bucke	vs.
Item to him that brought hit	xiiid.
Item for a pottell of wine and for sugar when Sir John Huband was here	xvid.
Item paid to Richard Smith for mending the locke of the dore of the Gaoll Hall	xiiid."

The Corporation being generously disposed towards a lady, perhaps on account of some service she or her husband had rendered the town, resolved on December 13, 1611 —

"At this hall yt ys agreed that a sugar loaf of xiiis. iiiid. value be given to My Lady Grevill for a New yeres gifte."

"Regulation of the drink traffic" was required in the time of Shakespeare as much as in our own time, as drinking ale to excess was a common vice. There were some small ale-house keepers called typlers in Stratford, who had to be forbidden to brew their own ale, on account of —

"The greate disorders in this burroughe by the typlers therein inhabiteing through their unreasonable strong drincke, and the increase of quarrelinge, and other misdemeanours in their howses, and the further and greater impoverysheinge of manie poor men there inhabiteing and hawnteinge the said howses, when their wyves and chyltren are in extremetie of beggyng."

The price of both bread and beer was fixed,— of the latter a dozen gallons, 13 gallons to the dozen, were to be sold for 2s., and loaves were to be of constant size and be sold one a penny, two a penny, and four a penny.



Stratford-on-Avon upon the Occasion of a Shakespeare Jubilee.

Middle of eighteenth century.

The central building covers the remains of the Market-Cross.

(From an old painting.)

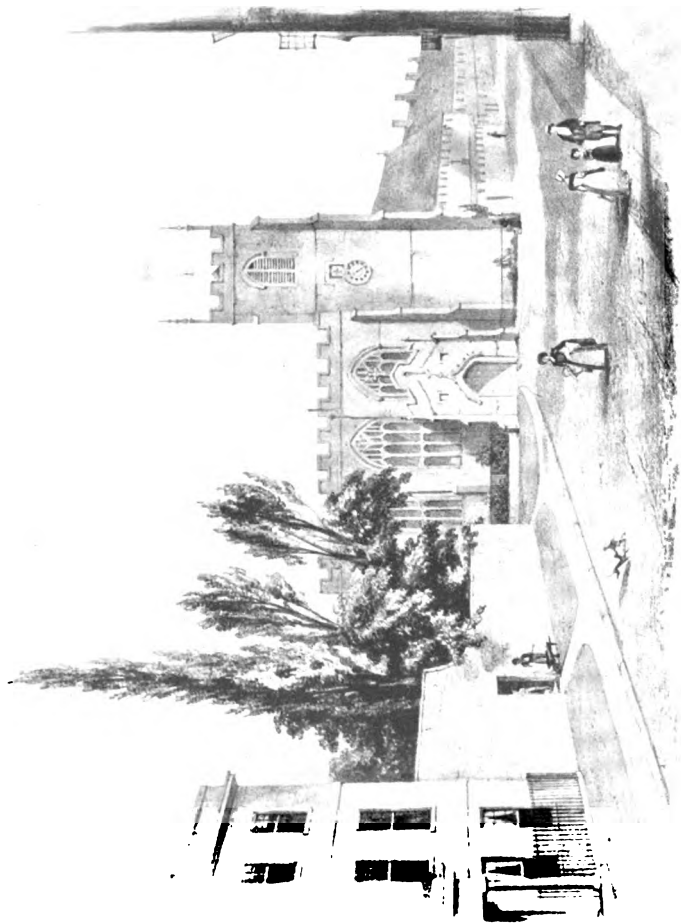
Curious orders of the Council in the nature of bye-laws were promulgated for preventing quarrels in the market place, by regulating the stands of the merchants, and forbidding outsiders to come in and compete in trade with the Stratford men, excepting on fair days, and excepting as regards things to eat and drink. Flesh was not to be hung upon or about the market cross, nor washing to be done at the pump situated near the cross, nor clothes hung to dry in such a central and public place. The inhabitants were too careless of committing nuisances to the annoyance of their neighbours, and common dung-hills were appointed and people forbidden "layeing donge or mucke in the streetes or lanes," or having pigs or ducks in the street wandering without an attendant, or keeping too many pigs on the patch of common ground by the riverside, called then, as now, "the Bancrofte."

The bailiff and his deputy, the chief alderman, were justices of the peace within the borough, and as their education was not always very perfect, the local court was doubtless, from time to time the scene of some remarkable applications of the law, which indeed is likely to have been sometimes made for the occasion as well as administered.

As we walk about Stratford with these facts in our minds, we try to imagine what the old town and life in it were like in Shakespeare's days. It is necessary in order to do this to reduce the number of houses in the streets, making some of them stand detached and nearly all of them of a low, half-timbered, many-gabled type, with small latticed windows, resembling some of those that still exist. The chief streets are roughly

paved with stones or pebbles, and the by-streets are lanes resembling the country roads, with a soft surface, very muddy in the winter season, "when ways be foul." The shops, as well as the inns, have signs hung out at their fronts, and the shop-keepers and their apprentices appear at their doors, dressed in many-buttoned doublets and trunk hose, some of them bloated and red-faced from their beer-drinking habits. As it is a market day many rough rustics are in the town, with clumsy carts and waggons, and stalls are erected about the market cross and elsewhere in the streets, for the exhibition of various things for sale, including crockery and ironware, poultry, eggs, butter, meat, and clothes. The speech used in the streets and the inn-yards is of such accent and dialect as to be very difficult for us to understand. It is a motley throng we see and in the middle of it chances to come a "pressessyon" of the Corporation "in their gownez," for every alderman and capital burgess is obliged under penalty of xiid. to appear with "a gowne upon his bac." Very strange it all appears to us, but it is Stratford-on-Avon in England all the same, and when we look at the modern town, our impression of it is still tinged with the dream of its aspect as it used to be three hundred years ago.

There are many persons in Stratford each day who are strangers to the town and locality. They come in by the trains of the railways, or by coach from Leamington or Birmingham, and they stay half a day, or sometimes longer, and there must be existing in the minds of these visitants a variety of Stratfords, which will accord with individual powers of observation of



The Guild Chapel, Guild Buildings, and Site of "New Place."

Stratford-on-Avon.

The house in which Shakespeare died stood where the trees are.

(After an old print.)

things which actually exist, of imagination of things which have existed, and of poetic appreciation of both. Few or not one of them can gain a very accurate conception of the place and people as they really are.

For the local people Stratford is not so much the town of Shakespeare, as the market-town of Stratford. There are numbers of people living within a dozen miles of this town who have never been here, and when they do come, it will be to buy, sell, receive, or deliver something, or to hire a servant, or be hired, and not to worship at the shrine of the great poet. The town was before Shakespeare, and maintains locally a primal importance, to which the fact of its having supplied the circumstances into which Shakespeare was born is accidental. At the present time Stratford does not differ materially from other market towns in central England, excepting that on account of its many visitors, it is a little more smartly kept. There are Warwick and Banbury and Shipston-on-Stour, especially the two first-named, which divide with Stratford the marketing interest of South Warwickshire and parts of the neighbouring counties, the markets and fairs of these towns being arranged on different days so as to allow the same people to attend them all. Friday is now market-day at Stratford, with a cattle sale on Tuesday, and the great annual statute hiring fair is in October. Oxen and other animals are roasted whole in the streets at this fair and people bring plates and dishes for slices and servings, a bit of the tough and a bit of the tender cut from the roasting carcase, until the bones are carved clean, and a great skeleton is all that remains upon the revolving pole,

the end of which has been driven into the hub of a cart-wheel in order that this great spit may be turned round in front of the improvised fire-back built of loose brick upon the highway. This custom is undoubtedly the remnant of the old church feast fair above referred to. These annual fairs bear different titles in the different towns, thus it is Warwick Mop, and Stratford Mop, and Shipston Bull-roast, and Banbury Fair. To speak properly, you must not call Stratford Mop Stratford Fair, nor Banbury Fair Banbury Mop. To these fairs the farmers, their wives, and others come to hire men and maid servants. The chaps stand in the street where the old market-cross used to stand at the top of Bridge Street, Stratford, and those who want to serve where horses are kept put bits of whipcord in their caps as a sign of this, and the masters come and hire them for a year, from Michaelmas to Michaelmas, at a fixed wage per annum, and when the agreement is made the engaged man is given a shilling earnest money, the reception of which makes the contract of service a legal one. The wenches used to stand in the street in the same way, but nowadays they go to a registry office, usually kept by a woman agent, and the mistresses look them up at these places. The servants who are hired in this way are members of the larger poor families in the villages round. Although hired for a twelvemonth, the engagement is terminable upon a month's notice from either party; but this was not so in Shakespeare's time, as is shown by the following record of a case heard in the Stratford Court, January 11, 1611, when it appears to have been held that a master who had retained the services



Fallen Leaves.
In Stratford Churchyard.

of a servant for a twelvemonth could demand specific performance of the contract.

" Upon complaynt made by Humphrey Allen of Old Stratford that Johan his servant being now about Michaelmas last past retayned to serve him for a year then to come at xxvis. viiid. wages and a pair of shoes, refused to serve him any longer but would depart from his service, the said Johan was caused to come before Mr. Bayliff and Mr. Alderman, two of His Majesty's Justices of the Peace within the County of Warwicke, Justices of the Boroughe of Stratford-upon-Avon within the libertys of which boroughe Old Stratford is. . . . and there John Sheffield's wife testyfyenge that she was hired as aforesaid, and earnest given unto the said Johan by the said Humphrey before them to serve him, and she refused to serve him any longer. . . . she is therefore commytted to prison there to remain without bayle or maynprise untyle she shall be bound to serve the sayd Humphrey according to the retainer aforesayd."

The Stratford of to-day is a remarkably clean and pleasant little town. It contains many old houses, but it differs from some other old towns in the width of its streets and general openness of build. It is common in all old market towns to find a wide space in one street provided for the purpose of markets and public meetings, and in Stratford this particular street is Bridge Street, though there is also the wide space of Rother Street, where the rother market, that is, the cattle market, used to be held, and where now stands a fountain and clock erected by an American citizen. But as market yards and houses have been provided elsewhere, Bridge Street is now only a broad main road on most days of the year, though upon market days, it is true, the carts and vans of the carriers from the numerous villages round are permitted, on account of immemorial custom, to stand down the middle of this street. At the top of Bridge Street, and nearly

at right angles to it, goes the other chief street of Stratford, which, though of no great length, is called High Street, Chapel Street, and Church Street in its succeeding sections. The square tower and walls, white and much weather-worn, of the Guild Chapel, jutting forward a little into this street, present an aspect of hoary antiquity, and the Grammar School and Almshouses adjacent to it look as old in a different way, with the black beams in their walls, and their old gables and doors. In these streets are situated the chief hotels and shops, and there are many other streets in the town, all clean and wide, some running towards the river, and some out countrywards. As the houses in all these old streets are every one different from its neighbour, they make broken and irregular lines of brick and stone, plaster and woodwork, the general result being heterogeneous but not unpleasing.

The people of Stratford are like its houses, still partly of an ancient style; particularly in the speech of those who come into the town on a market day may the original local genus be detected; those who have been in the town a long time, by contact with other conditions and influences having suffered modernisation. The following conversation between two old farmers which we overhear in the yard of "The Unicorn Inn" on a market morning may be taken as an example of the local speech :—

"Hullo-o ! Mah-aster Smi-iles, what here ya be agen then. Well to be shu-ure ! And how be fo-olks at Ti-i-isa?"

"Oh I d'know I'm shu-ure, fairish I s'pose; how be um your wa-ay?"

"About the say-am like. Why I doon't beleave as I ha sin ya sin last maw-op. How did that cha-ap suit as ya hi-ired?"



High Street and Chapel Street—Stratford.

An ancestor of the founder of Harvard University owned the house with the gable front on the right.
The square building on the left is the Town Hall.

Stratford-on-Avon.

"Well I'll tell ya. He's the biggest foo-ul as ever wur. It wur on'y yisterday as ha comes up afee-uld var nigh a mi-ul jest t'tell ma as the ro-an kyow and her kyalf were got into the gyardin and were yettin the kyabbages. 'Ya gret sah-uft, 'I says, 'goo back whum and get um out o' the gyardin.' And jest as I wur gooin' to start this mo-ornin, I sin him alo-a-din 'urdles to ta-ak to the tur-r-nup fee-uld. Us had bin adraw-awin some on um wi fu-uzz to ma-ak a bit o' burro for the y-ows. He whacks um on the kyart anyhow. 'Nethen,' I says, 'you'll ha' them 'urdles off that kyart; can't ya see as they be all a-jaag?' And afoor ever ha wur through the ghy-ayt off um come wollup! The hoss wur frit t'dyeth and I thought he'd ha kicked the kyart all to jimrags. 'Theer ya be, 'I says, 'I told ya you'd do it, but you oodn't be sa-ed.' They taw-aks about ed-u-caah-shun jest as if ed-u-caah-shun wur gooin to putt sense into the yeds o' nat'ral foo-uls; and they keeps on pu-uttin up the ry-ates and pu-uttin up the ry-ates. It's onaccountable, yent it?"

"Onaccountable however! I be sick and sayated on it; and as to these lectures about ma-akin bu-utter and tack o that sort—well, I'll tell ya what it is, Will-yam, I kyant abear it, its that silly!"

"Hullo! Master Smiles, what, here you are again then. I am pleased to see you. And how are folks at Tysos?"

"Oh, I hardly know. Pretty well, I suppose. How are they your way?"

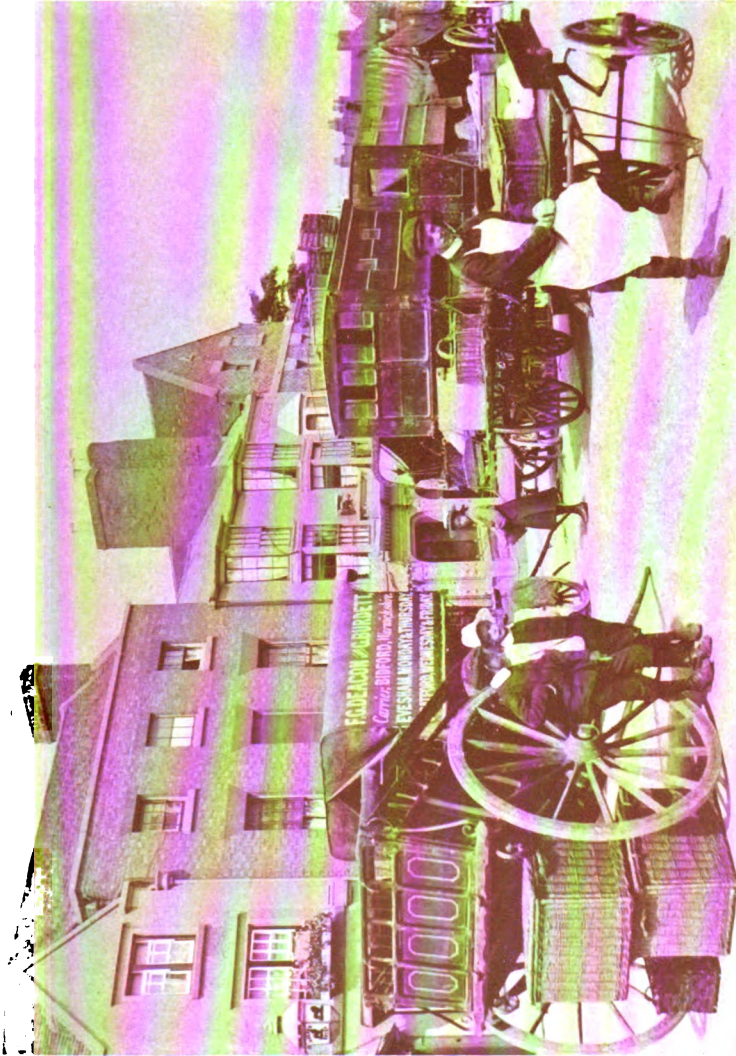
"About the same. Why, I don't believe I have seen you since last mop. How did that young man suit whom you hired?"

"I will tell you. He is the greatest fool that ever was. It was only yesterday that he came to me in the field, nearly a mile, just to tell me that the roan cow and her calf had got into the garden and were eating the cabbages. 'Go back home, you silly fellow,' I said, 'and get them out of the garden.' And just as I was going to start this morning, I saw him loading hurdles to take to the turnip-field. We had been drawing furze through some of them, to make a shelter for the ewes. He threw them carelessly on the cart. 'Now then,' I said, 'you'll have those hurdles off that cart; can't you see they are all a-swing?' and before he was through the gate, off they came with a crash. The horse was frightened to death and I thought he would have kicked the cart to small pieces. 'There you are,' I said, 'I told you you would do that, but you would not be told.' They talk about education, just as if education would put sense into the heads of natural fools; and they keep on putting up the rates and putting up the rates. It's too bad, isn't it?"

"Much too bad. I am quite tired of it, and as to these lectures about making better and stuff of that kind, I tell you, William, I don't like it at all. It is so silly!"

These farmers are representatives of the slow-speaking Midlanders — the English of the neighbourhood of the great Fosse Road. It is very unwise to form an estimate of their characters from their mode of speech and appearance. They have a long mixed ancestry, and you can never tell what they will produce in the shape of sons and daughters: genius is as likely to come from such a brood as any. Shakespeare was of that yeoman parentage. The townsmen of Stratford are of this class — the traders, that is, who are the most important element in the population.

The Borough of Stratford is governed by these burgesses as is the case everywhere, and no doubt Stratford is well and wisely governed by the members of its corporation, elected by the votes of the trading class and craftsmen chiefly from amongst themselves, that is to say, as well and wisely as any town can be governed by a number of average men. Humanity is frail. The public acts of town councils are open to public criticism. The frailty of humanity is apparent in these acts, and some people think themselves specially wise in being able to criticise them; but when the critics themselves are elected on the council, the frailty is as apparent as before, and they are invariably criticised in turn. The Stratford Town Council is composed of the same quality of men as in John Shakespeare's time, though the six aldermen and eighteen councillors, headed by the Mayor, who constitute the present Corporation, no doubt have advantages in the matter of education over the bailiff, chief alderman, aldermen, and capital burgesses who managed the town's affairs of old.



Carriers' Carts in Bridge Street on a Market-day.

Stratford-on-Avon.

The quiet country life and rustic characteristics, as known in and about Stratford, are changing with the times. Those carriers' carts that stand in Bridge Street on Fridays are to some extent a measure of it. Hitherto they have been the means of commercial transactions between town and village or farm. After numerous calls and delays at one place and another, with slow hill-climbings and gentle jog-trots on the level road, they bring in the produce of the country, eggs, butter, cheese, fruit, and take back the things they were ordered to bring from the ironmongers and fishmongers, and other mongers of the town. But the competition of railways, and quite recently of motor carriages belonging to greedy railway companies, is reducing the number of carriers' carts that were wont to stand in Bridge Street on a market day. The world no longer progresses by easy ambles and jog-trots, and it seems likely that even the most remote villages will soon be drawn into the whirl of modern existence, when there will be no more travelling to town in the carrier's cart at the leisurely speed of ten miles in three hours. Ah, but there was not the strain, the hurry and worry and wear in the old mode!

BEFORE SHAKESPEARE'S TOMB

What is man from his birth?
A poor vessel of earth —
A lanthorn of slight wear and little worth,
That encloses a spark
Of fire,
Which no purchase, or hire
Can maintain a continuing light in the dark.

The Idyllic Avon

It flickers and flies ;
Then the poor vessel lies
Dead, as we say ; but no man wholly dies,
For the light he has shed is immortal !

So, in this lowly tomb
That gives Shakespeare's bones room,
We know Death, by the universal doom,
Hath taken his toll
Of dust ;
And we bow, as we must,
Before the cast-off garment of so precious a soul ;
And we say with a sigh,
" Where it is let it lie
Dead, but our Shakespeare lives never to die,
For the bard in his song is immortal !"

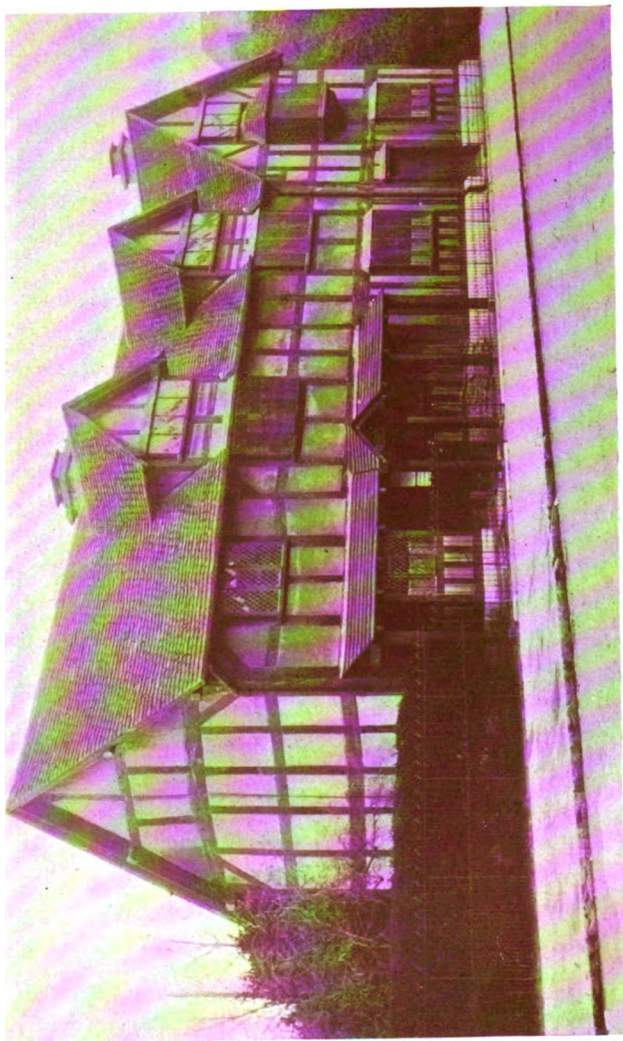
CHAPTER XX

STRATFORD AND SHAKESPEARE

JOHN SHAKESPEARE was elected an Alderman of Stratford Council when his son William was fifteen months old. John maintained his connection, as an Alderman, with the Council for twenty-one years, so that the poet grew up in the atmosphere of the "may-sters and brethren." When the father Shakespeare became bailiff he sat in the local court as a magistrate. Thus in 1568 the cases are recorded as having been tried "*coram magistro Johanne Shakyspere, ballivo, magistro Johanne Wheler, aldermanno, et aliis burgensibus,*" and John Shakespeare was a frequent litigant in the same court throughout his life, sometimes suing and sometimes being sued, and his son must have been an onlooker at some of the numerous actions in which his father was plaintiff or defendant, and was doubtless quite familiar with a succession of constables and their clerks, some of whom were of the Dogberry and Verges type, less a little exaggeration. He also must have heard a good deal of talk about the town council, its deeds and misdeeds, and would have sided with his father in friendship or enmity of the several burgesses and aldermen. In his youth he witnessed the promenades of the council in their gowns at every great function, and saw the local magnates in the persons of Sir Thomas Lucy, Sir Fulke Greville, and possibly

the Earl of Warwick. He is certain to have attended town functions, public funerals, and entertainments, and at that time it was the custom of the Stratford Corporation, as shown in their accounts, to engage and pay acting companies, such as those who played under the patronage of Lord Leicester, Lord Warwick, or Lord Essex, and who seem to have travelled about the country from town to town. He saw congregations of all sorts of people at Stratford fairs — boxers, wrestlers, musicians, and buffoons. Men carried arms in those days, and there were frequent brawls in the taverns, when out came the dagger or small sword at the slightest provocation and often with fatal results. When the itinerant judges came round to fulfil their several commissions of assize, the young man William Shakespeare is very likely to have walked the eight miles to Warwick with companions of his class, to hear the trial of a friend or acquaintance. He was living in a district where there was great opportunity of becoming familiar with every natural object of forest and field, river and hill. In fact, it is certain that Shakespeare gained much material for his plays from his Stratford life and experiences. He was here in the way of obtaining a wider and more distinctive and impressive education than any college could have afforded him, with its conventional studies.

We visit the house of the Shakespeare family, the birthplace of the poet, in Henley Street, which has been visited by a multitude of eminent and ordinary persons. It is the habitation of the petty tradesman. There is the room which was the shop, and the kitchen behind it, and the few bedrooms of very moderate



Shakespeare's Birthplace.

Stratford-on-Avon.

dimensions, and the apartment which would serve as a little parlour or living room, where are now set out for exhibition a few precious relics. The place is remarkable for its littleness, unpretentiousness, simplicity. There is the kitchen fire-place under its great open chimney with hanging pot-hooks; the stone floor; the narrow staircase; the small latticed windows looking out to the street, or to the old garden behind, where they have planted many of the garden flowers and weeds mentioned by Shakespeare. It is all so simple, so strong, so essentially human.

After visiting Shakespeare's birthplace, we visit his school, and enter the original barn-like old schoolroom with its unceiled roof and great black beams, and here we think of the boy whose destiny it was to become the greatest of poets, sitting at one of those dark, much-hacked old desks, absorbing into his capacious brain what there was to be learned, not spelling and numbers and fragmentary Latin alone, but the peculiarities of master and usher and comrade. Shakespeare's was a brain that was easily impressed; he was of that most observant type, taking in with avidity everything that presented itself, to be reproduced at will, or to feed in after days his mighty imagination; and his powers of memory must have been extraordinary. He noticed small details and remembered them, such as the five spots at the throat of the cowslip bell, and at the same time took the most boundless view of all that is held in earth and heaven. He was full of sentiment and feeling, an appreciator of everything beautiful and touching, whether in natural objects or in human life and its experiences, and soon came to have a clearer under-

standing of human motives than other men. Another trait that helps to make him so great is his limitless breadth of mind and universal sympathy. He is of no caste or creed and hardly of any age, but is for all time and for all people.

And this old school, over which many a pedant has presided, is the school of that wonderful boy. The reflection is almost amusing. Shakespeare's education was a very wide one, but was chiefly of "extra-mural" acquisition, and self-acquired. Nevertheless, a glory which is all its own attaches to Stratford Grammar School. It is the school that was good enough for Shakespeare!

From Shakespeare's school it is but across the way to "New Place" the house which Shakespeare purchased and lived in when he came back to Stratford after his London career. The garden of the house is open for public promenade, and contains an old mulberry tree, which is said to be a descendant, by grafting, of the tree planted and left here by Shakespeare. Of the house nothing remains besides the ruined foundations, and the well which supplied the house with water, "New Place" having been pulled down by a subsequent owner, not because it was too old to stand, but out of pure wrong-headedness on the owner's part, for he demolished the house simply to avoid paying a local tax levied upon house property for the maintenance of the poor. At the house that stands adjacent, which is quite an old one, there are some few objects of interest of Shakespearian age on exhibition.

At "New Place" Shakespeare entertained the friends of his later manhood, both those who lived in



Shakespeare's School.

Stratford-on-Avon.

London and those who lived in Stratford and its neighbourhood,— of the former, Ben Jonson was one. Here Shakespeare lived with his family about him, from whom he had been much separated. His daughters were married, his favourite daughter, Susannah, married to Dr. Hall, and both she and his daughter Judith lived in the town, and are likely to have been frequently at the poet's house. According to a statement obtained by one who wrote of Shakespeare and who lived so near his time as to be likely to have obtained accurate information, the poet continued to write quite actively after his retirement from London, and it may therefore be supposed that some of his later productions were written here. His wife was still alive and though older than himself she outlived him by some years.

We seek the place of Shakespeare's courtship, the well preserved thatched cottage at Shottery. The nearest way there is by a footpath across two or three fields, and most people who go there, quietly walking from Stratford — especially on a moonlight night, enter into the glamour of the romance of that love affair. Shakespeare is likely to have often walked to Shottery, drawn thither by the attraction of his Anne Hathaway, whose father was perhaps hardly in such a good position in life as John Shakespeare, and the matter was probably viewed with disapprobation by the latter, but if that were of any consequence then, it matters little now, unless it were the determining circumstance which impelled the young man upon his career of actor and writer. But Shakespeare, who could tell the lover's tale so well, lived through the experience himself at Shottery, and his Anne listened

for the sound of his step and the click of the latch of the wicket gate that told of his approach up the path bordered by old-fashioned garden flowers.

Shakespeare died at "New Place" and they buried him in Holy Trinity Church at Stratford. The church is not far from the house, or where the house stood. We pass down Church Street, which brings us to the church-yard gate and the thickly planted avenue of lime-trees that leads to the main entrance porch. We enter there and walk up the nave to the choir and look down upon the stone, beneath which lie the remains of Shakespeare's mortal body, and upon which is engraved that rugged injunction:—

" Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To digg the dust enclosed heare:
Blest be ye man yt. spares thes stones,
And curst be he yt. moves my bones."

It is a remarkably simple tomb — just a flat stone forming part of the floor paving of the chancel, and near it, under other flat stones, lie the bodies of some of his nearest relatives. But no one would desire to have the tomb of Shakespeare less simple than it is.

At the side of the chancel, near one of the windows, stands the half-figure monument, Shakespeare being represented with paper before him and a quill in his hand in the act of writing. Below the bust is this inscription:—

" Judicio Pylum, Genio Socratem, Arte Marionem,
Terra tegit, populus mœret, Olympus habet."

" Stay, passenger, why goest thou so fast ?
Read, if thou canst, whom envious death hath plast
Within this monument, Shakespeare, with whome



Ann Hathaway's Cottage.

Shottery near Stratford-on-Avon.

Quicke nature dide, whose name doth deck ye tombe
Far more than cost, sith all yt. he hath writt
Leaves living art but page to serve his witt."

Obit ano. do. 1616 Aetatis 53 die 23 Ap.

This monument was put up in Stratford Church soon after Shakespeare's death and assists to prove that the poet had some considerable appreciation during his lifetime. It is specifically referred to as being in Stratford Church in some verses by Leonard Digges, published in 1623 (see the "Life of Shakespeare" by Sidney Lee), and is said to have been made by Gerard Johnson (or Jansen), a Dutch monumental mason who was practising his trade in England at the time of Shakespeare's death.

Sir William Dugdale, in his History of Warwickshire, published in 1656, gives a figure of the monument and a copy of the inscription on the gravestone, and says of Stratford:—"This ancient town gave birth and sepulture to our late famous poet Will. Shakespeare, whose monument I have inserted in my discourse of the church."

By whom the Latin part of the inscription upon the monument was written is unknown; that Dr. Hall, Shakespeare's son-in-law, may have written it has been surmised, but only on the supposition that he knew Latin. Whether it were he, Ben Jonson, or another, no one can tell, but it must have been some person who knew and appreciated the character of Shakespeare and his works who described him as like Nestor of Pylos in judgment, a Socrates in genius, a Maro (Virgil) in art, and as being one whom the earth covers and the people mourn, whilst the immortals give him a place amongst themselves.

A church is a convenient retreat in which to sit and think, and there is no church superior to Stratford church in this particular, notwithstanding the continual coming and going of the many visitors. So here we come to sit on several occasions, either in semi-solitude at comparatively quiet times, to contemplate old mortality, or listening to the often reiterated afternoon service and the singing of the choir. It is a fine church, of very ancient foundation, the interior illuminated by numerous large windows, and having pointed arches between centre and side aisles rising from hexagonal pillars, and perpendicular columns running upward above the arches to crown-like capitals that support the wooden roof, the general effect being light and elegant. The admirers of Shakespeare have made gifts to the church for its further adornment, and it is little likely that there will ever be wanting the requisite funds to keep the structure in good repair. The shrines of many a saint in many a church have been broken down, and the sites of them lost to remembrance; but the works of those saints, though very good, were not so unique as those of Shakespeare. The thousands who make pilgrimage here do not come with the idea of being cured of their bodily ailments, but there is a kind of worship going on continually near Shakespeare's tomb, which is perhaps as good a part of religion as anything the old church has known, either in its Roman Catholic days, or since. Shakespeare's own religion was comprehensive, Catholic according to the best meaning of the word. He does not often trench upon religious matters in his writings, but when he does it is always with great



**Where Shakespeare Rests by Avonside.
Stratford-on-Avon.**

reverence. It is impossible to say he belonged to any sect, and it was perhaps due to the fact of his having bought the tithes that he and his family were buried where they are; but it is probable that he is buried where he desired to be, and the place is an appropriate repository for that part of him which died. His body is in its native ground, and his tomb, in keeping with his simple personal history, is sufficient and is well placed in Stratford church.

At the end of the third quarter of last century, a project of putting up some memorial building in Stratford was mooted, and a theatre above all places was deemed most appropriate. The result was that a building comprising a theatre combined with a library and a picture gallery, was erected on the bank of the Avon. From the old church we come to these Memorial Buildings which are approached from a river-side street. The theatre is used from time to time and particularly in April each year, the custom of holding an annual dramatic festival in that month in Stratford in honour of Shakespeare having been established. A number of his plays are performed in the theatre upon his birthday, April 23rd, and succeeding days.

The library consists of books upon matters connected more or less closely with Shakespeare and Stratford-on-Avon, and has already become an extensive and most valuable collection. There are translations of the works of Shakespeare into many languages, so that no one is likely to visit Stratford and be unable here to make reference to the compositions of the great poet in his own tongue. Amongst other books in the Memorial Library there are copies of the publications

of that extraordinary body of persons called the "Baconians," who started the strange heresy that Shakespeare's works were written, not by Shakespeare, but by Francis Bacon. It was past the comprehension of these people that a person of Shakespeare's birth and early education could have written as he did, but they thought that Bacon, whose worldly position and apparent opportunities of acquiring a certain sort of knowledge were superior to Shakespeare's, must have written the works ascribed to the latter. They sought to prove it by a curious mode of reasoning. They presumed that Bacon would have used some means of showing after generations that he really was the author of the plays, although during his lifetime he had allowed William Shakespeare to take all the credit for them, and had bribed — and that successfully — printers, publishers, and all concerned, to keep the true authorship a dead secret, and further suborned Ben Jonson to write a panegyric upon Shakespeare in order to further the mask, and had succeeded in deceiving the public, including Shakespeare's contemporaries, the people of Stratford, also Milton, Dugdale, and everybody else, for two hundred and fifty years, when the "Baconians" arose. Bacon, they said, would have inserted in the works a cryptogram, or cypher writing, which would prove his authorship. Having this idea well before them they endeavoured to discover the cryptogram, and soon declared themselves successful, in fact, one and another of them claimed to have discovered several cyphers or cryptograms in Shakespeare's works, each different from the others. Some said that the authors of these cryptograms or cyphers



Shakespeare.
(The Chandos portrait.)

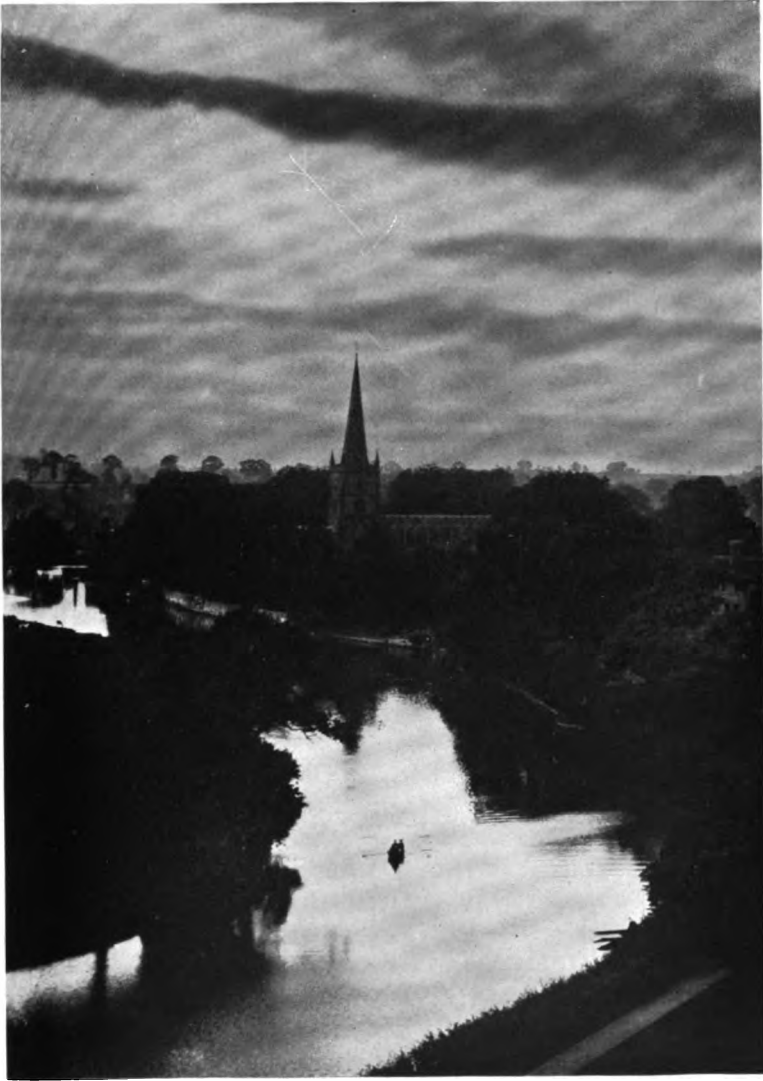
After the bust of Shakespeare in Stratford Church.

were trying to gain money and notoriety by very base means, and what put an end to their further productions was the fact which they at last recognised, that by putting their names as authors upon books and pamphlets upon this subject, they were advertising themselves to this and succeeding generations, as persons, either lacking in mental powers, or else devoid of any spark of honesty. In the Shakespeare Memorial Library specimens of this literature may be found, which are likely to serve as curious examples of human folly and insincerity for anyone who at present or hereafter may casually look into them. Even the more favourable supposition that these authors were persons of crotchety and contrary minds, and without a feather's-weight of judgment, will hardly excuse them.

In the Picture Gallery of the Memorial Buildings at Stratford there is a collection of good pictures. In some, scenes from the poet's plays are depicted and there are portraits of actors and actresses distinguished in Shakesperian drama, and some of Shakespeare himself, including the original Droeshout portrait, from which the engraving in the first folio edition of Shakespeare's works, published in 1623, was copied. There are several portraits of Shakespeare extant, painted when the poet was at different ages, besides two or three busts. They are somewhat unlike each other, but have certain points in common, and considering that portrait painting was an art but little developed in England at that time, it is not to be wondered at that some of the portraits are amateurish and not in the most artistic style. The subject is sometimes

represented with hair upon his face and sometimes shaved. Probably when acting he would have been clean shaved. The Droeshout portrait is of the head, nearly full face, with a badly drawn bit of body beneath it. The face is shaved and the moustache is in the condition of bristly sprouting. Whilst Shakespeare was an actor it may have sometimes been in that condition. And we have Ben Jonson's word for it that this portrait resembles Shakespeare, so it is to be presumed that he had seen him looking something like that.

Another portrait of Shakespeare when he was in the prime of his life, is that commonly called the Chandos portrait, from its having for a long time been in the possession of the Duke of Buckingham. The original of this is not at Stratford, but there are engravings of it in the Memorial Library there, and it has been copied very numerous times, not infrequently with considerable alteration, but the head is generally recognisable in all the copies by the subject wearing an earring. In Queen Elizabeth's time men sometimes wore earrings, and the fact of the habit having been particularly affected by sailors, has suggested that Shakespeare may have been to sea. It is probable that he travelled at some time in his earlier adult life. His Italian plays seem to point with little doubt to his having been in Italy. In regard to this painting there is a great probability of its being a genuine portrait, as it was owned by Sir William Davenant, who is said to have been the godson of Shakespeare, and, being himself a poet, he would have been proud of his connection with Shakespeare, and have preserved this picture with care, knowing it to be in fact what it claims to be. Its



In the Moonlight on the Avon.
Stratford-on-Avon.

later history has been clearly traced and it is now in public possession in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

There are several other portraits of Shakespeare in one place and another, and there is the bust in Stratford Church. This last is said to have been made from a cast of the poet's face taken after death, and although the face of a dead man always looks different to the living face, we are driven to suppose that the bust is to some considerable extent reminiscent of Shakespeare in the last years of his life, because when it was put up in the Church there were numbers of people who must have seen it, who had seen and known the man himself.

No doubt there is an art that can make a plain face interesting, but it cannot be said that this art was greatly displayed by the sculptor of the bust. He was too faithful to his death-mask to make a satisfactory portrait. In an old book which we find in Stratford Memorial Library, entitled "Avon a Poem," there is a good engraving which we beg leave to copy. It has the following inscription attached to it:—

"Engraved by Wm. Ward, A.R.A., from a painting by Thomas Phillips, Esq., R.A., after a cast by Bullock from the Monumental Bust at Stratford-on-Avon.

MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

HIS TRUE EFFIGIES

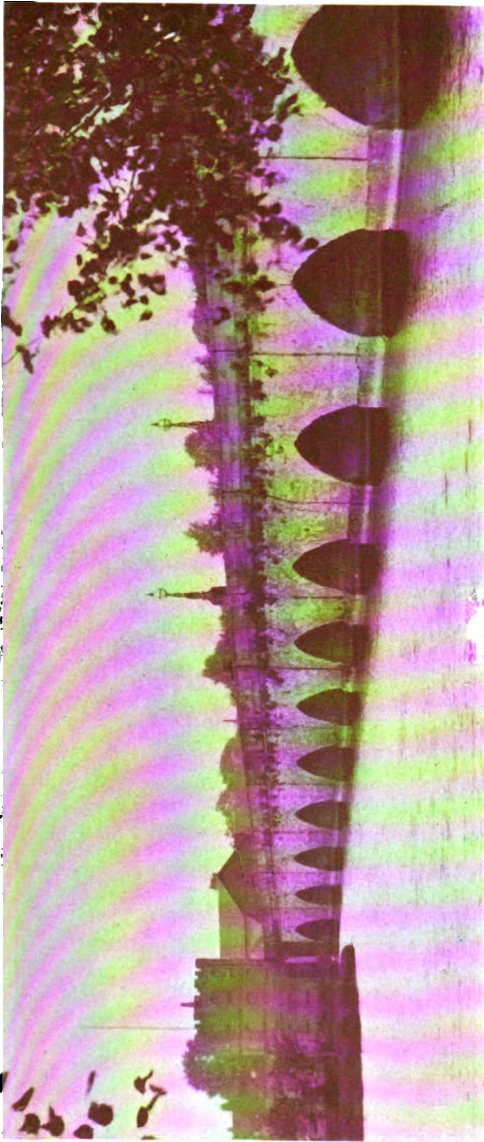
To the Right Honourable the Earl of Essex, an admirer of Shakespeare, of polite literature and of the fine arts. This print is published April 1816 being the second century after the poet's decease. by J. Britton, Tavistock Place, London."

The several persons who had a hand in making this picture are to be congratulated upon the result. Bul

lock was noted in his time for making casts, at which art he was particularly facile, and Thomas Phillips Esq., R.A., was artist enough to see that the dead face required a few touches to bring it back to life. It was not the rounded glory of the flesh of youth that was required. This was Shakespeare fifty-three years of age, when his face must have borne some evidence of gathered experience and work accomplished. He therefore deepened the pucker between the eyebrows, painted the nose a little bolder, and also the folds leading from above the nostrils downwards under the cheeks, and so improved the relaxed lineless face of the sculpture. He has left the eyes as they are in the bust, without pupils; both hair and eyes of the bust were originally painted to their natural colour.

There are other places we visit in Stratford and its neighbourhood connected with Shakespeare. There is the village of Snitterfield, the original home of his father, and Wilmcote, where is to be seen the farmhouse home of Mary Arden, his mother, still standing, though now turned to humble cottage use. There is also Welcombe, within walking distance, where in Shakespeare's time there was common or unenclosed ground of a banky, broken nature, well known to the poet, who must have seen there some of the wild flowers which he mentions, the wild thyme for instance.

Shakespeare makes mention of Gloucestershire on several occasions. Stratford-on-Avon is on the extreme verge of Warwickshire where it touches Gloucestershire. By a footpath we go by "Cross o' the Hill" to Clifford Chambers, a Gloucestershire village, a walk of about two miles. Charlecote Park, where the poet



Stratford Bridge.



Stratford-on-Avon.

in his youth is said to have stolen the deer, is near at hand, and is still held by a member of the Lucy family. When Shakespeare made fun of Sir Thomas Lucy in the character of Justice Shallow in the "Merry Wives of Windsor" he partly covered his identity by making him "In the County of Gloucester, Justice of Peace," whilst Charlecote of course lies a good four miles on the Warwickshire side of the County boundary.

IN THE MOONLIGHT ON THE AVON AT STRAT-
FORD-ON-AVON

When moonlight falls on Avon's stream
In silver showers of liquid light,
And trembling stars at heights supreme,
With mirrored sparks dark depths ignite,

By Stratford bridge we seek our boat,
Where tethered at the river-side,
Then dip our oars, and lightly float
To Stratford church on Avon's tide.

Here Shakespeare's dust, the earthly tie
Of his great spirit sleeping lies;
And Stratford's slender steeple high
Above it points towards the skies.

And skyward gazing long we look,
Wondering, "Does Shakespeare live there yet?"
The heavens lie open as a book,—
Could we but read that alphabet!

Sure, from the stars a voice let fall
A word, as falls a beam of light.
No! That was but the curlew's call
To a companion in its flight.

The Idyllic Avon

There is no sign above, around,
No answer to the questioning eye,
Or the soul's claim to space and ground
In that immense infinity.

Yet never force was lost once found,
Our clearest reason this ensures,
And somewhere in the ethereal round,
What once was Shakespeare still endures.

Suns set at eve and rise at prime,
The clocks their tale of hours rehearse ; —
The Universe knows nought of time,
And man is of the Universe.

We dip our oars to make return,
Where moonlight falls on Avon's stream,
And myriad stars in beauty burn
Inscrutable, at heights supreme.



The Shakespeare Memorial.

Stratford-on-Avon.

CHAPTER XXI

THE AVON AT STRATFORD

BY the side of the old town that seems to bear its age so lightly flows the Avon. By the side of it, and not through it, for the streets are all on one side, and on the other side the meadows; though the limit of the area over which the mayor and corporation have jurisdiction extends well over the river.

Before reaching Stratford the river has come as a stripling brook out of Northamptonshire, and afterwards has passed near Guy's Cliff and Warwick Castle, Barford Bridge and Charlecote Park, by alternate deeps and shallows, often closely overhung by tree-branches which nod and wave and sometimes touch each other above the water — poplars and willows and alders, and great elms standing only a little in the rear of these. From shady glooms it bursts occasionally into sunlit shining stretches, with rushes and sedges and reeds fringing its shores and eyots, with lilies reclining upon its surface, and the bits of blue and white and rose and yellow of the blossoms, which illuminate it with their mild lights. It is still a silent river, but not quite so voiceless as in its lower part, as here the shallows are of much more frequent occurrence, and the bottom is of hard rock. In the winter, when the leaves have fallen, and its state is more desolate, the red fruits of hawthorn and briar, and the yellows and browns

of decaying leaves and sedge-blades still make a little colour, and on mornings of hoar-frost, the slender twigs of the willows and the grass of the neighbouring meads, whitened by crystallised dews, make a beautiful setting to its water, frozen to black ice, or swollen to muddy swiftness by heavy previous rains.

The river has properly reached Stratford when it comes to Stratford Bridge, for from the bridge you have but to walk up Bridge Street to be in the centre of the town. This bridge is sometimes called the Clopton Bridge, after the name of the builder, Sir Hugh Clopton, a good knight of the time of Henry VII., which was nearly a century before Shakespeare's time. Sir Hugh, who was of the family of Clopton of Clopton House, near by Stratford, became Lord Mayor of London and was the author of many good works. He built "New Place" and lived there part of his time in Stratford. The bridge consists of immensely solid piers, and fourteen narrow arches, and bears its four hundred years and more of age as if that were a triviality in comparison to the time that it may stand, with a little attention, once or twice a century, to a loose or worn stone here and there. It has met with some adventure, as in the time of the Carolian Civil War, when the order came down from London that one of its arches was to be removed for the greater public safety, presumably against marauding bands of irregular soldiery. It has been made wider "for the greater public safety" at some time or other, by the addition of a footway thrown out from one side upon iron brackets.

After passing under this long old stone bridge, the

Avon flows beneath a second bridge, which carries a tramway and footpath, and thence down past the little public park known as the Bancroft, which was "Bank Croft" originally, perhaps, as "croft" is a common word in Stratford used to signify an enclosure, although generally an enclosure with a dwelling within it. Afterwards, the river goes past the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre and its garden where stands the fine statue of Shakespeare, with sculptured characters from his plays about its base. The theatre presents a by no means inartistic appearance by the river side, in fact great praise is due to the architect whose task, to put an appropriate building by the Avon side at Stratford, was a severe trial of ability. The building looks well; and its reflection in the river when the water is quite calm looks almost better. So, on to the parish church of Holy Trinity, whose slender steeple is also reflected from the river's surface, and whose large windows and battlemented parapet show up pleasantly from a nest of foliage when viewed from the bank. Near the churchyard is an old decayed lock, and immediately below are the weir and the mill, the latter being the last building of the town in this direction.

On the further bank of the Avon are the Corporation meadows, the larger of which is the public recreation ground. At the bridge foot is "The Swan's Nest," an inn of considerable size, but of more homely service than "The Red Horse" or "The Shakespeare" hotels, though these latter are also country inns, however superciliously they look down upon "The Golden Lion," "The Falcon," "The Unicorn," or other inns in the town. "The Swan's Nest," however, has a

sentimental and not inappropriate name, being by the riverside. It has numerous boats on hire and, moreover, stands in quiet seclusion over the bridge, and has a little private sitting-room to let, and so commends itself to those who are inclined to shun the multitude, being better content with quiet independence and simple fare. Near "The Swan's Nest" is the approach to the recreation ground, and the smaller meadow with its row of old willows, where you may walk along the river-bank and get those pleasing views of the theatre and the parish church. Down below the mill you can get across the river by a foot-bridge and visit the church and come back through the town, or continue your walk by footways on either side of the river. On one side the path runs close to the bank and over stiles all the way to Luddington; on the other side is the path to Clifford Chambers, with a branch to the romantic Wyre Brake, where the nightingales sing in their season, and where lovers walk all the year round.

There is a great deal of boating done at Stratford on the river above the mill. First, there are two or three small steamboats, which, in the summer, keep on running all day, up and down. Starting from the Bancroft, they go down past the church to a spot near the mill, then back and under the bridge and up the river for about a mile and a half and, finding a convenient place for turning round, they come back again. Having taken this voyage and paid your sixpence, you may thereafter honestly relate how you navigated the Avon when at Stratford. In the steamboat you do this easily and quickly, but the more romantic way is to do it in a small boat, preferably a punt, for here the



By the Old Lock.

Stratford-on-Avon.

hard gravel bottom, and not too great depth of the river, are good for punting, and the small draught of the flat-bottomed punt gives this mode of voyaging an advantage over the row-boat in passing rapids and shallows. Then, too, if you come into a deep stretch of water and wish for a change of exercise, you can lay aside the punting pole and take to paddling, especially upon the return down stream, when the expenditure of less energy is required.

We take to punting and soon learn to handle the pole with good effect, trailing it properly behind to act as a rudder after each stroke. Sometimes we go up to Tiddington, past the bathing place where you may get a swim in the river every morning if that way disposed. We come into sight of the green Welcombe hills, and see the obelisk set up in memory of Mr. Phillips standing upon one of them very prominently; and we go past several prettily situated riverside houses, one of them with an avenue of poplars running up to it from the water. On another occasion, taking some lunch in a basket and starting in the morning, we get up past Hatton Rock to Alveston Mill. Here we go ashore and wander up the lane to the village, to find our way to a footpath that runs from the neighbourhood of the ferry pleasantly along the top of a steep cliff, from the end of which we get our furthest view of the Avon, where it is seen coming down from the direction of the deer-park of Charlecote. We go no further, although it is possible, with increasing difficulty at the shallows and dams, to get a boat some miles further up the river towards Warwick.

The Avon immediately above Stratford is green as

any part, the trees being very thickly placed, and all the flowers of the river are here, and most of its other creatures. The river adds greatly to the pleasure of life at Stratford. It is a beautiful stream, which it is a delight to look upon and to float upon, and to study, and it reflects one of the most charming features of Nature, and offers much material for education — that kind of education in which Shakespeare was so apt a scholar, and for which there is no other teacher than Nature herself. In this school there are many backward children, those to whom the cowslip can never be anything but a thing of that name and, since they are, as it were, blind and deaf from birth, they can never comprehend those delights of eye which arise out of contemplation of Nature's magic scenes, or those ecstasies of ear which attend her occult whisperings.

From the tramway bridge over the Avon at Stratford there is a good prospect of the river above and below. On an evening, after the twilight has faded away, it pleases us to walk out upon this bridge, and at this time very few foot-passengers make use of it, as it leads only to the recreation ground and other places to which people do not desire to go after dark. It is now our last evening at Stratford, and we stand upon this bridge for the last time. The moon has come up and shines brilliantly above Trinity Church, making a long line of reflected light upon the river, and some nearer detached spangles where the surface of the water is rippled by the breeze. That same breeze causes a slight lapping sound of water against the sides of the moored boats and the landing-stage of the house of the boating club,



Sunset on the Avon.

The Avon near Evesham.

which is just below; all else is quiet. The two little steamers lying at the shore of the Bancroft, as well as the Memorial Buildings, are dimly visible, but it is the church, with its tapering spire and enshrouding trees, that is most attractive to the sight. This lures us to seek our boat and float down to the church for a last voyage in the moonlight. A lady writer, who lives in Stratford, has fancied that the tapering, cross-tipped spire of the old church, rising above Shakespeare's tomb, resembles a pen forever writing upon the sky. But to us, to-night, it is rather as a pointer, pointing starward to the illimitable universe.

We have finished our pilgrimage, having voyaged up from beautiful old Tewkesbury to Stratford. It was May when we started, and now there is a keenness in the wind-gust, which tells that summer is spent. A thick mist lies over the meadows; the birds are silent, and the leaves are falling. But other summers will be as this has been, and the Idyllic Avon will be as we have seen it, providing pleasure for those who come to greet it, and happy remembrance for those who, like ourselves, have grown familiar with its scenes, and have come to the time of bidding it adieu.

DORIS PUTS HER SLIPPERS ON

When the bud upon the thorn
Tells of May-time present;
When the grass and springing corn
Look so green and pleasant;
When 'tis morning cool and sweet
In the flowery meadow,
Doris runs with naked feet
Through the sun and shadow.

The Idyllic Avon

Buds to fuller leafage shoot ;
Corn from green turns yellow ;
Flowers fade, then follows fruit
Sweet and ripe and mellow.
Now the day is nearing noon,
Where 'twas morning lately,
Doris walks in dainty shoon,
Through the meads sedately.

When the hay and harvest sheaves
From the fields are taken ;
When brown boughs and fallen leaves
Thoughts of Winter waken ;
When, the sun being set and gone,
Meads are past desiring,
Doris puts her slippers on,
Soon to be retiring.

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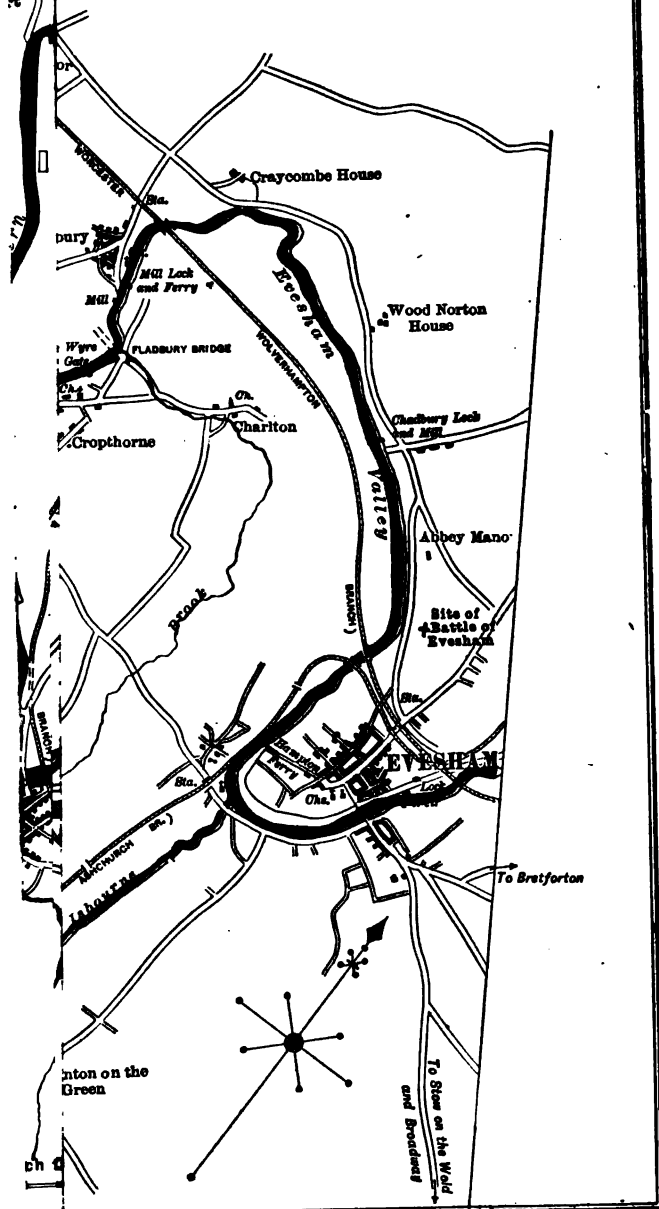
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